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PURPLE TINTS

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CHARACTER AND MANNERS IN THE NEW EMPIRE.

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BY BAYLE ST. JOHN,

AUTHOR OF

"VILLAGE LIFE IN EGYPT;" "TWO YEARS' RESIDENCE IN A LEVANTINE FAMILY," ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

I AM glad of the privilege of preliminary talk which a Preface affords. Like the few last words spoken at the window of a railway carriage by a traveller to the friends he leaves behind him, it gives an opportunity of correcting or explaining, or adapting to altered circumstances, or enforcing more briefly and energetically, what has already been largely unfolded. When I undertook to describe the "Purple Tints of Paris," the Imperial awning had only just been thrown over the country, and seemed to flutter in the breezes that blew from all sides. My object was, not exactly to paint the influence a new Government may have already had upon the externals of society—not to record changes in ladies' head-dresses or gentlemen's coats—but to show what features in French character, what defects in French civilisation, morality, and forms of thought, rendered an Empire

possible. To a certain extent I may be admitted to have achieved this object; for I agree with all the great masters of history in tracing the fall of States to corruption of private manners and inefficient education.

Do any Imperial tints flush over the surface of our own society? Is there sufficient ignorance and depravity to render it possible that we should ever fall back under—no matter what form of Government, and cease to assume the conduct of our own affairs? I think not, because, although there is a party, long identified with the support of arbitrary principles, that endeavours to obstruct teaching, all the intellect of the nation seems engaged in elaborating or recommending schemes by which those who do not know may be made to know. Such a spontaneous movement has never taken place in France, where the tendency is always to deprive individuals of the duty and the privilege of thought. From the charge of the mineral waters of Vichy, up to the task of education, the responsibility of everything is thrown upon the State.

We must not, however, be too confident in the excellences of our own civilisation. Perhaps I have been away so much, in other moral and intellectual

climates, that things very natural in themselves strike me as ludicrous or offensive. If I am not mistaken, the most obvious defect to be noticed in England is stiffness, physical and mental. It is this that leads foreigners into the strange mistake of supposing that we are without passion, whereas there is no nation more impulsive and impetuous. Are we obliged to be starched and bridled lest we should develop into unimaginable antics? Possibly—in the absence of a better kind of restraint. Until this be found, England will remain a cheerless place—with all her unsurpassed virtues—a kind of Miss Ophelia among nations, requiring close acquaintance to awaken anything like love. I shall endeavour to set down some of the observations that suggest themselves to me on English aspects in a little publication projected by a circle of friends—which I take this opportunity of advertising—to be called, somewhat oddly, "Utopia." Is it not better to lead the people in search even of a visionary good than to allow them to forget—like so many Lotophagi—over the nauseously sweet food now set before them, that to-day should be but a stepping-stone towards to-morrow; whilst to-morrow, perhaps, they will find no footing and sink—no: be wafted, whither it imports them to inquire?

I do not apologise for introducing extraneous matter into my Preface, because I know that such things are only read by the few who like to draw a little nearer than usual to the writer by whom they are informed or amused. I always thus reward myself by anticipation for the labours of authorship; for it is some reward to know, or to believe, that simultaneously all round a circle—no matter how restricted the diameter—your written words beget thoughts in many minds with whom you never may commune otherwise. Writers who select more elevated themes, or begin in a higher key, can afford to dispense with this confession; but an Essayist, who is obliged to record his impressions as well as his experiences, and to introduce the reader as it were to the fire-side of his thoughts, must endeavour to be affably familiar.

In the present case, though I have set down a variety of observations on Paris that may be thought trifling or superfluous, I have been compelled sometimes to discuss the gravest subjects that can occupy the pen.

These volumes were planned, and in great part written, before circumstances forced England into active alliance with the Emperor of the French.

They now seem to me to have acquired an additional and adventitious interest. Previously, in as far as my observations assumed a political character, they were in part intended to keep alive generally that spirit of opposition to arbitrary government — whether usurped or exercised by inheritance; that is, usurped in another age — which forms the essential ally of public opinion in a free country. At present, we are menaced with a great danger. Interest is whispering corrupt things to our reason and our conscience; and because we have need of one Autocrat to fight against another, some are willing to be persuaded that tyranny may be odious on the banks of the Neva and yet admirable on the banks of the Seine.

These opinions are as absurd as they are unnecessary. We are no more bound to feel or affect admiration for the principles or the person of the French Emperor because our fleets are at present combined with his, than we are to be in ecstacies with the forms of Turkish administration because it is our policy to prevent Russia from stealing another portion of the Ottoman dominions. In England—a country that prides itself, as I have hinted, on its coldness—there is, however, a great fund of ill-regulated enthusiasm, ready to flow with huge clamour and

billowing towards the feet of any representative of Power. Unless my recollections greatly deceive me, the present Czar of Russia was received with acclamation in England during his last visit; that loathsome monster, Ibrahim Pasha, was made the pet of polite circles; and I do not believe that anything with a crown on its head, or the title of Prince attached to its name, ever failed to excite noisy applause from the street-walking public. If a detested General, by imprudently putting himself in contact with a more genuine class of the community, did provoke an outburst of feeling, he was well compensated by expressed sympathy from all "respectable" quarters —the same that tried to "pooh-pooh" the popular demonstrations in favour of Kossuth.

We must, therefore, take into account this servile tendency, which shows itself in alliance with the same greedy curiosity that prompts people to run after Aztec Indians, Devil-Raisers, and other quackeries, in explaining the partial favour with which the name of Louis Napoleon is now received. But it is chiefly in a sort of affectation of policy that the cause must be sought. Sycophancy, however, will find itself mistaken. The Emperor of the French — eminently a man of one passion, the love

of power — will be influenced in his actions neither by praise nor by blame. As long as he finds it useful to co-operate with this country he will co-operate, regardless alike of criticism and adulation. Nothing that is said on our side of the Channel will have any other effect than to influence the formation of our own modes of thought, the direction of our own speculations. To teach the people that power sanctifies him who obtains it, no matter by what means, — that successful administration atones for any guilt, — that we may properly cling to liberty ourselves, and rejoice when our neighbours lose it, — is certainly a dangerous attack on the idea of right, an effective pleading for the doctrine of expediency, but still more certainly will never retard, by one single day, any project of Aggression or Desertion, — if such project be entertained on other grounds.

I think that our line of conduct and argument is very clearly laid down by circumstances. We should avoid as much as possible any personal attacks on the Chief of the French State, — any attempt to penetrate into his private life, — any temptation to repeat unnecessarily the withering charges which both opponents and spectators

brought forward at the most decisive period of his history. Yet endeavours to exalt him into a pure benefactor of his country, to confound him with a Washington or an Antonine, to extenuate his crimes or metamorphose them into virtues, must be met with the materials which we have at hand. I have done my best to steer a middle course,—to judge rather of the politician than the man; but I feel that indignation has sometimes carried me away,—not beyond the bounds of truth—I have never reached them,—but beyond what I conceived at the outset to be a tone in harmony with a description of manners and an analysis of national character. There are topics which the mind cannot approach without being heated. There are times when moderation must be hypocrisy.

However, if I have been very severe anywhere, it is against the French nation, or rather the educated and wealthy classes which affect to represent it. There is no possibility of giving an explanation of what has recently occurred,—in fact, of any great historical event since 1789,—without going upon this ground, that, for reasons which it is not my province now to develop, the upper classes in France, whether they be called Noblesse or Bour-

geoisie, have proved themselves incompetent for government, and altogether unworthy of respect and confidence. It seems fashionable, among persons who are fonder of rhetoric than fact, to conjure up some hideous monsters from mythological Faubourgs, — men whose business is revolutions, whose delight is in *émeutes*, who appear only when society is in peril, and who are ever ready to fall upon and tear it to pieces. All this is very childish. If there be classes permanently desirous to engage in overthrowing a Government, that is a plain proof that the Government must be very bad indeed. Any one who attends for a moment to the mode of life of a workman in tolerably full employment, will understand at once that he cannot spend his time even in supporting laudable schemes. The necessities of the day absorb nine-tenths of his attention. If, however, by a wasteful system of government, and an unjust distribution of taxation, you weigh so heavily upon him, that, with the utmost willingness, he cannot avoid misery; if you answer his complaints by quotations from Political Economy, which always goes on the supposition that there are no artificial laws, by favour of which some are comfortable and others not, — a

supposition untrue in any country; if you excite and take advantage of his enthusiasm one day, and then restrict political power to the classes which he regards as his natural enemies; if you are ruthlessly savage in punishing his outbreaks; if you surround him by every restriction, every difficulty, every annoyance that a police composed of thief-takers can invent; if you give satisfaction to none of his ideas, and base your policy on principles which he detests — why, then it is absurd to complain that he should seize the opportunity of toppling down a dynasty in 1848, and for some time afterwards, tormented by vague desires, fears, and jealousies, which those in power excited rather than allayed, be ready to appeal to arms with or without reason. However, the restless classes were, at length, calmed down, although still none of their opinions were complied with. They prepared to exert the privileges which the constitution had given them, and began educating themselves in the machinery of elections. Instead of making some concessions — as I believe even the most bigoted party would have done in England — the Reactionists in France struck off the list of voters nearly three millions of the men who had elected them; and impudently announced their in-

tention of carrying on the government with "the purified lists." What people affected to anticipate with so much alarm as "the fatal year 1852," was nothing but the chance that the excluded classes, I cannot think very improperly, should carry out their threat of voting in spite of the law that had robbed them of a right which they had gained by some hard fighting. Of course, such an attempt might have led to very serious disturbances; but who would have caused them, if not the party and the classes which had endeavoured to confiscate political power for their own profit? On this stupendous blunder was the success of the present Emperor based. With wonderful knowledge of the French character he assisted in passing the disfranchising law, and then, at a moment chosen by himself, proposed to repeal it. At the last hour wisdom came not to the governing classes in France. They persisted, and were deservedly punished. Every working man who did not vote for the Emperor from fear did so from a respectable, though unenlightened, gratitude; and this is partly the reason, combined with certain velleities of Socialism, why he has become the instrument of the wrath of the Lower against the Upper Orders of Society. The people,

at any rate, find some consolation for their disaster in beholding the politicians who believed that, without them, the world would not go round, entirely set aside, or banished, or ordered to remain within doors, or punished by the ignominy of pardon.

Prophecies are dangerous things to deal in, and I always avoid them if possible. However, I can scarcely conclude these remarks without saying that the hopes which seem to be entertained in France by certain relics of ancient parties—ancient and condemned—that another chance may be given to any members of the old reigning family, have no visible foundation. That family, in both its branches, has had opportunities enough. A nation cannot afford to be always restoring its kings. History, moreover, would become too monotonous. The probability, then, is, that Napoleon III.—who has more talent and knowledge than a whole dynasty of princes of that effete kind, and perhaps quite as much virtue—will reign until the French nation, in sober sadness, once more sets about the task of constructing a Republic.

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PURPLE TINTS OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

Hasty Conclusions—First Impressions—Old Acquaintance with France—My Prejudices—French and English—Limits of the subject—Egotism—New Streets—Changes in the Aspect of Paris—War against old Names—Great Battles and National Prejudices—Waterloo—Counter-criticisms—Spoils of Conquest—Historical Amenities—Public Works and Communism—English Opinions—Our Countrywomen scolded—Beauty and Influence of Paris.

THE French are fond of telling a story about an Englishman who, on landing at Calais, was sulkily received by a red-haired hostess, and forthwith wrote down in his note-book,—"All Frenchwomen are sulky and red-haired." What corrections were afterwards made in this judgment we are not told. It is probable that a mind capable of generalisation so rapid was incapable of giving a second hearing to

the cause, and that our hasty traveller spent more time and ingenuity in finding reasons to justify his original opinion than would have enabled him to range through the whole scope of French manners. He is mentioned as an oddity; but, perhaps, thought will teach us that, in another kind of journey, most men waste half their energies in endeavouring to keep in countenance some early error that they have made their bosom friend.

However this may be, no traveller need doubt that his first impressions of a country are erroneous. Even when we look at the forms of material palpable objects, the judgment is obliged to correct the eye. On entering a room which custom has not made familiar, there is a competition of tables, chairs, and fire-irons for our notice; and even an auctioneer's observation is staggered for a moment. What confusion is created in our ideas when we move to a new house! We are placed in another centre, and feel like a forlorn mathematical point to which radii have not yet had time to converge. Everything around has a foreign aspect. The sounds of the street seem strange. Even the house-dog barks uneasily at night. We try to feel at home; but in vain. Remorse comes over us for unjust aspersions on the feline race. The colour of the wall-paper is odd. The windows are out of place; so are the doors, the chimneypieces, and the

cupboards. The sun has shifted his position; and the postman comes down the street a different way. For some time the mind remains perplexed by a sense of absurdity.

I have felt this odd feeling about other countries, but not about France. For I first set my foot—a very small foot, then—on the coast of Normandy, in the year 1829. This may explain why I am obliged to have recourse to reason, in order to persuade myself that it is ridiculous for women to wear bonnets as high as steeples. That kind of head-dress appears to me rather elegant than otherwise; and when young travellers begin to laugh at it, I feel as cold as when some modern wit uses names that are sacred, and mentions things that are mysteries, as an incentive to laughter. I do not see the funny side of the matter at all.

However, if my taste remain so far corrupted, in spite of long intervals of experience in other countries, I must admit that a recent sojourn in France has deprived me of many of my prejudices in its favour. Not, perhaps, that I like it less than of yore; but my respect for the people has diminished. If love is akin to pity, pity is akin to contempt. A nation, like an individual, when unfortunate from its own fault, must expect its friends to fall off. They fall off so easily, even from unmerited disaster.

What lances have I broken for France in my time! Why, I have made myself disagreeable to half my friends, by checking their criticisms when they seemed to flow rather from prejudice than knowledge. My enthusiasm has greatly diminished. Let me hope that I have retrograded to the half-way house of impartiality. At any rate I shall neither calumniate nor flatter—rather the second than the first; but there are certain things that must be said not commendatory. These volumes, moreover, will scarcely cross the Channel. If they should, let those who notice a lack of compliments remember that England has been so maltreated in French writing and conversation, that the word "Anglais," when it does not excite hatred, is almost always associated with ridicule. I shall not, however, as I have hinted, yield to the temptation to make reprisals; partly because there is nothing so monotonous as vituperation and satire, partly because I want the inclination. In truth—and be sure this admission will warm the heart of every true Gaul—France has been a great nation in arts and arms, and must not be despised because it is at present under a cloud.

It would be ungrateful in me to deny that some of the pleasantest hours that have brightened on my path—some of those hours that shine more and more vividly as they recede in time—have been

spent in Paris. In the centre of that great city I have, for many years past, set up my literary hermitage; and there, relations growing around me, I have been brought acquainted with many features of French manners which seem to me legitimate objects of art. We cannot all be historical painters. The scenes of daily life, the changing forms of contemporary society, even mutations in the physiognomy of cities, the influence of new institutions on individual habits and modes of thought, the by-play of national character—all these are valuable materials for moral speculation. In the present case I shall have to notice the purple tints cast down upon society by the imperial canopy now spread over it. They are as yet faint, but will deepen as time proceeds, unless some great tempest should blow and leave France once more without any roof but heaven.

So many, however, know, and so many more fancy they know, a thing or two about French manners, that I fear rebuke for entering into trifling and familiar details. It is best, perhaps, at once to confess that I have few revelations in store for travellers, but that these pages are principally addressed to the idle who have not yet gone abroad. My public will be large enough. I shall choose exactly that class of facts which I have found interesting to tell when, during my occasional visits to England, the

cheerful winter fire has drawn a semicircle of friends into cozy proximity, and questions have suggested answers that have gradually grown into narrative.

I shall so frequently be led to speak in the first person, that there is danger of a charge of egotism. Perhaps the admission that the charge is true may endear me to my readers, who, naturally, hate those who are without fault. I am sure I do. Besides, it would be presumption to usurp the impersonality of the historian or the philosopher. Narrative is the best way of showing how matters are managed in France as elsewhere. I do not purpose to myself a general picture of manners, but shall draw more from my experience, necessarily imperfect, than from my reading.

There will be few dissentients from the statement that Paris is one of the finest cities of the world—let us say the finest; for this will very shortly be true. Even within the last twenty years its aspect has completely changed, and since the re-establishment of arbitrary government the improvement has almost been miraculous. Whole quarters, refuges of poverty and democracy, have been cut down; broad streets, by which fresh air and artillery may penetrate in every direction, have been opened; public buildings, capable of being used as fortresses, are rising everywhere. The health of the inhabitants cannot fail to be improved; and the pale-faced, lantern-

jawed Parisian, the artificer of revolutions, the Cassius of the Faubourg St. Antoine, will doubtless soon make way for a rosy-cheeked race, whose dreams will never be disturbed by reflections on the rights of man. This is a very cheerful prospect, and I am not far from understanding the observations that used at first to irritate me when they fell from my stout countrymen and fair countrywomen, in answer to certain disagreeable statements as to the origin of the present government. "But see what *he* (meaning his majesty the Emperor) has done for Paris!" Fine masonry is certainly an excellent substitute for liberty; and we need not despair of the return of a Tory government in England, if it will only promise to give us some excellent thoroughfares.

Most persons are tempted to exaggerate the relative importance of the changes and revolutions that take place before their eyes. A meteor shooting near at hand seems to mock the velocity of a comet. Thus we hear talk of nothing but the wonderful doings in the trowel-and-plummet line in Paris, as though that capital had hitherto remained stationary. If, however, we look at the map published in 1782, we shall find that nearly all the present establishments, colleges, museums, cemeteries, which are among the signs of advancing civilisation, are not mentioned; whilst everywhere are set down names of convents

and ecclesiastical buildings of various kinds, that have now no existence. The Revolution varied and improved the physiognomy of the capital as much as the condition of the country — it changed cloisters into libraries: the Empire did its part also; but it changed churches into barracks. Unfortunately, ignorance or reckless barbarity has destroyed many venerable monuments, which gives occasion to the lovers of the old régime to cry out against the Vandalism of all innovators.

There is nothing so pleasant in walking through a great capital as to find hints and reminiscences of historical events, or bygone states of society, in the names of the streets. I regret, therefore, the system suggested by the violence of party feeling, according to which, at each successive change of government, old names are effaced to make way for new ones. There is, surely, little to regret in the times of pure monarchy; but as the greatest part of the life of Paris was spent under that régime, there is no reason for effacing every trace of it. I have no veneration for the muster-roll of the Calendar, yet it seems to me a kind of fraud upon St. Victor to efface his name to make way for that of Cuvier. The great naturalist, though he emulated the servility of Verulam, was entitled to stand godfather to a new street. A regret has already been expressed that the street of the Golden King is now nowhere to be

found; and I admit that I go from time to time into the Quartier Latin to see that the name of Git le Cœur, which suggests to me all sorts of mysterious and poetical ideas, has not been effaced. A series of streets, connected by new openings, has lately been called Rue Bonaparte; but it is not any political prejudice that makes me regret the disappearance of the old inscription, in ugly stone letters, of "St. Germain-in-the-Fields."

A great many streets in Paris are named from foreign cities; in order, as the French say, to express its cosmopolitan character—as the Rue de Bruxelles, de Londres, d'Amsterdam, &c.; and an opportunity is never lost of making an allusion to the great victories gained by France. We have the bridges of Jena, Austerlitz, and Arcole; the streets of Castiglione, Rivoli, des Pyramides, and a host of others. Besides this, very properly, there is a catalogue of all the battles, in which the French army has distinguished itself, inscribed on the Triumphal Arch; among others Aboukir, which greatly puzzles our honest tars who are unlearned in the history of land skirmishes, and do not know that that place is described in French geographies as "a spot celebrated by a victory of Napoleon." For my part, I do not see that the names of great battles should be forgotten, any more than the names of other remarkable historical events. Why, therefore, should we

be rebuked, not only in conversation, but by grave philosophical writers, for being a little lavish in the use of the word Waterloo? "You cannot move a step in England without seeing the name of Waterloo," indignantly exclaims a Professor at the College of France: "a street is called Waterloo, a bridge Waterloo, even commercial houses—always Waterloo, always France!" This is very trivial; but without noticing such traits, it would be impossible to obtain a correct idea of the character of the French. Any reference made to defeats sustained by their armies thrills them with indignation, and the most amusing thing is that they cannot conceal their feelings, but complain even in print. There is, in fact, no nation more obtuse in sentiment when speaking of foreigners, even to their faces, and yet no nation so sensitive when its own doings are concerned. They will unconsciously talk of Jena and Marengo to a Prussian or an Austrian, but if an Englishman mentions Waterloo, they really regard him as a brute, and for the time imagine, that if positions were changed they would be more generous. It should be made a maxim of international morality, that all peoples should treat others as the French imagine that others ought to treat them. There was a period when it was dangerous for any person of the name of Lowe to travel in France. I have heard fifty stories, several of which may be true, of different kinds

of torture and insult to which some imaginary *Sir Hoodson Lov* has been subjected by parties of gallant young Frenchmen, determined to avenge the imprisonment of St. Helena. Now these anecdotes were always told to me with the naïve expectation that I should sympathise with them. It is difficult to describe this curious state of mind. Let me give another illustration. Southey, in his "Life of Nelson," uses the following phrase:—"The French, who have never acted a generous part in the history of the world, &c." The Professor already quoted, upon this flies into a passion, and observes, in a tone of profound belief,—"In France, a known writer who should thus express himself about one of the nations of Europe would be hooted in the streets." I do not know what there may be peculiarly offensive or inappropriate in the charge of want of generosity; but it seems to me equally unpleasant to be called greedy, grasping, perfidious, ruthless, mercenary, poisoners; which epithets, and a thousand others, have been employed by writers who would be very much offended to be thought unknown, and who have not yet been hooted in the streets. I wish particularly to point out, however, that the French are really and truly unconscious of the value of the terms applied by them to others, whilst their every nerve vibrates with indignation at the slightest criticism of their own conduct. If I did not fear to be

called ungallant, I should say that this is one of the points in which their character is feminine. Women, when they have irritated their husbands beyond bearing, are ever ready to invoke the privileges of their sex; and the French have persuaded themselves that they are entitled to a similar impunity. Those who do not quite understand this frame of mind, should remember the amusing discussion about the tricolored flag on the occasion of the Duke of Wellington's funeral; and read M. Vaulabelle's doleful lamentations at the resumption in 1815, by victorious foreign powers, of objects of art previously carried off as booty by the French armies; which resumption is called "an insolent abuse of victory." This curious phrase occurs in the best history of the two Restorations that has been published. The finishing touch to the meanness of these complaints is given by a detail intended to heighten the accusation against the Allies:—"Many pictures were taken that had actually been bought with cash!" If the criticism had been confined to these instances, there might have been some excuse; but to apply the word "spoliation" to the act of recovering stolen property is peculiarly French.

If we seek for illustrations of this singular mental phenomenon in more vulgar writers than those I have already alluded to, we shall find it exaggerated into a disease. A Frenchman—the exceptions are

too rare to notice—has, without knowing it, two moral standards—two tribunals, judging by different laws—one for his own nation, the other for foreigners. When we, for example, commit any act that seems improper, it is immediately denounced in terms of inelegant reprobation. The extravagances of the press may be excused, but the second-class historical writers furnish specimens sufficiently amusing. There is M. Elias Regnault, who has written an account of the last years of Louis Philippe's reign. He cannot speak of our diplomacy without calling it "insolent" and "brutal"—terms which, it is true, we have not had an opportunity of applying to French diplomacy for many a year. It has generally been sufficiently supple and accommodating. However, I do not think that, even if irritated by a spirited act of our sometime rival and provisional ally, any English writer, pretending to an historical character, could use expressions so coarse. It is unnecessary to say, that had the acts complained of been committed by France, they would have been "decided," "vigorous," and so forth. But this is scarcely surprising, and belongs, perhaps, to ordinary human nature. More characteristic instances may be found. In the Syrian war, according to M. Regnault, the Emir Beshir having failed—involuntarily, it is said—to perform his promise of giving himself up on a particular day, was sent

to Malta under surveillance, and is represented as the victim of a "treacherous ambuscade." The son of the French king makes a solemn engagement to free Abd-el-Kader, if he will come in. This is simply a "rash promise, which the Government could not, or ought not, to ratify." Our Admiral seized some Egyptian ships in the harbour of Beyrout—unfairly, says M. Regnault. Well, let us take his account of the matter, and admit, saving the style, that this is "an act of piracy," "a brutal execution," "a violation of the law of nations." Morality cannot be too sensitive, and public acts cannot be too severely judged. In an adjoining chapter, I find a fact mentioned which reminds us of the scalping atrocities of the American war. Referring to the victory of an Arab traitor in the pay of France,—"devoted to France," is the expression—I find it said, "When he sent information of this success to the governor of the province of Constantine, he forwarded as trophies of victory four hundred and fifty right ears!" I looked on to see what terms of reprobation would be used in speaking of this horrid circumstance, and found not a word; it does not even suggest a remark. What a pity this sackful of ears, torn from the dead and dying on the field of battle, was not sent to an English governor! How would not the vocabulary of insult have been ransacked for epithets! Really all this is very sad; and it is sadder because these

contradictions are not deliberate. They arise, in the first place, from the instinctive mercifulness of the French for themselves, which I have endeavoured to bring out in relief; but they seem to indicate also a total absence of that moral sense which vibrates to the qualities of acts themselves, and not of the persons who commit them. If this singular deficiency influenced only opinions held of other nations, it might lead to nothing more than the perpetuation of war. Its action is, unfortunately, found in domestic affairs. Parties and classes judge of each other in the same way. Everything that is done by a friend is virtuous; all opponents are abused with true Celtic virulence. I have rarely met an Irishman, the father of whose enemy had not robbed a stage-coach. No Frenchman can admit that those who differ from him in opinion can be other than assassins and robbers. If we could believe the mutual recriminations of Republicans and Royalists, we should be obliged to call for a deluge to sweep the country of the whole malignant race. A Revolutionist will point to the Duc de Praslin as a type of the upper classes; and I once heard a wealthy Orleanist bring forward a murder and robbery, that had taken place on the 24th of February, as an instance of the way in which the "enemies of order" celebrated the anniversary of their Republic! It would be a cruel and not unjust punishment of the furious and unreasoning

spirit from which all this arises, to take the various histories that have been recently published to serve party purposes, and, without adding a word of remark, to construct a portrait of the French nation as painted by themselves. They would shrink with horror, and deny the likeness.

I must, however, check these excursive impulses, and return to the external aspect of Paris. I need not describe the recent embellishments, partly because they have been so much seen and talked of, partly because in another year I should have to begin again. It is impossible to walk out without noticing some new change. Even old Parisians are obliged to study the map of their city anew. There are many quarters in which I am quite at sea. All my landmarks have disappeared; and as I pick my way uncertain amidst vast hewn stones, over ground covered with white chips, between half-demolished houses, I cannot help meditating whether this system of employing a third of the population in knocking down and building up the capital, with the professed object of giving work to the classes that make *émeutes*, is not a coarse form of Communism. One of the practical deductions of that theory is, that when any portion of the population is in want of work, the accumulated capital of society must be used to give an artificial stimulus to production. There may be some truth in this; but

still, for my part, I am surprised to find so many of my countrymen in raptures with the worst possible application of a doctrine which, in its theoretical form, smites them with so much horror. The French, exercising that singular power they possess of self-consolation, are fond of describing their Emperor as the great Revolutionist, the great Socialist. According to them, he will do what they failed to do: he will make the monarchical chivalry to skip; he will take down the exorbitant pretensions of the rich. I have nothing to say to all this, especially as I am a terrible leveller myself; and, above all, quite delighted at the dispensation of Providence which castigates the upper and middle classes of France, because they found no better use to make of political power than to give it up for fear of what they always maintained to be a despicable minority—"*une infime minorité*" was the fashionable expression. Yet let me confess, that when I hear English travellers — there is scarcely an exception — answer all ill-natured criticism on the Emperor by mentioning the good he has done for Paris, I am still a little puzzled.

Of course this would not find its place here if it were probable that these pages could be much read in France; because, to tell the truth, I have always maintained among my friends there that we sturdy Britons care nothing for bricks and mortar, that we

set our liberty above city improvements, and that there is not one amongst us who would exchange his vote for the pleasure of walking down the finest street in Christendom. These apocryphal statements receive strange shocks from stray travellers like Mrs. ——, who exclaimed the other day, with tears in her eyes, scolding some disloyal Frenchmen, "How is it possible you do not like so *good* a man? See what fine streets he is building! What good he has done for Paris!"

To my shame be it confessed, that when the lady's back was turned, I disclaimed her for a countrywoman, declaring that she came from "the colonies;" but as this subterfuge was not new, it provoked the question, "Are all Englishwomen from the colonies?" The fact is, my invention is nearly exhausted, and I shall not much longer be able to exculpate my fellow-citizens. Let me remonstrate, at any rate, with the fair sex. Dear ladies, be Bonapartists if you please—it is quite genteel; but do not, because you admire the fine streets of Paris, tell French people they ought on that account to be satisfied with the present state of things. Do you know what they pretend behind your backs? Why, that a present of a handsome gown might make you say and do a great deal more; and, in truth, I remember now that Lady ——, after a week spent in Paris, did observe to me, "They tell me he has done

horrid things; but—he gives *such splendid balls!*" What the French say is impertinent; but if you examine your own hearts well, you will find that all this contemptuous neglect of ideas of right, this disregard of sentiments of humanity, this tendency to be captivated by show, this high price set on external improvements, this passionate admiration of the pageantries of life, this balancing of moral judgments, in which massacres are put in one tray and dancing-parties in another—all this brings you into strong affinity with the classes you most despise. You cannot understand political necessities. Louis Napoleon may have been right in what he did; but, dearest countrywomen, I should prefer not hearing you say so, just as I should prefer not hearing you decide on the merits of capital convictions at the Old Bailey, especially if you did so on the ground that the judge had beautiful robes and a fine flowing wig.

I have said a civil thing for Paris; but I am afraid that many Frenchmen would not be satisfied. Let me, therefore, translate, choosing at haphazard, one of the compliments which our neighbours are in the habit of paying to themselves, never without taking the opportunity to put unwieldy London in its right place. "Rome is a souvenir; London is a manufactory; Paris is an idea in a stone framework. This encyclopædic city preserves and increases with-

out ceasing within its walls, the dépôt of all human acquirements, of all useful discoveries. One of the characteristics of that Being of Reason, to which we have given the name of capital, is, in fact, universality. Paris resumes in its establishments, in its institutions, in its works, all the multiple science of the nineteenth century." It is not my fault if French eloquence, when translated, resembles nonsense. Other writers tell us that Paris is "the head of Europe, the brain of Europe, the heart of Europe;" which may probably explain why Europe sometimes plays strange antics. There is substantial truth, however, in these laudations. The French capital is certainly a wonderful place, architecturally and morally speaking. It would be graceful, however, in its inhabitants, and not unuseful to them, if they would pay a little attention to the condition and mechanism of a neighbouring capital, which they might find to be something else besides a workshop and a manufactory. As for the influence of Paris on the rest of the world, or rather, I should say, of Europe, it would, perhaps, be difficult to exaggerate it; but the French seem to derive too much satisfaction from an incontestable fact. People do not always imitate that which is best; and I am afraid that, if we are indebted to Paris for fashions and revolutions, we are also indebted to it for other things not quite so good.

CHAPTER II.

Exiles from the Capital—An atrocious Provincial—English Ladie—Beautiful Climate—A cloudy Day at Marseilles—The Country of Fogs—Coal and Charcoal—Dingy London—The Seine—Paris a Sea-port—Floating Baths—Advantages of Modesty—Athletic Exercises—Promenades—The Ringdoves of the Luxembourg—Private Gardens—Flowers—Commissionaires—Omnibuses—Dearth of Talk—Cab Regulations—Umbrellas and Washerwomen—Street Noises—National Airs—Emigration of Organs—Newsmen—their Persecutions—Street Police—"The Guard"—Patrols—Learned Police—Political Crimes.

PARIS covers a surface of thirty-four million square metres, and all its streets put on end would give a length of nearly two hundred leagues. French writers grow quite amorous in their descriptions of it, and enumerate its perfections in rapturous language. In this they perfectly represent the tone of society. Unhappy men who have been "exiled," as they express it, from Paris—that is to say, who have been compelled to journey for a month or so to a distance of fifty leagues—talk of its charms as you and I might talk of Fanny or Mary Ann. Commercial travellers speak of its wonders to those

who have remained all their lives sticking, like oysters, to their native rock, as pilgrims of old used to speak of the kingdom of Prester John. Nothing offends a Frenchman so much as a word of criticism against his darling capital, especially now that he has so little else to be proud of. I once ventured to observe at Arles, the city of pretty women, that it was rare to see a beautiful face in Paris. My interlocutor flushed up as if I had spoken ill of his mother, and began very hotly to expatiate on the graces and perfections of those whom I had thoughtlessly depreciated, not without some shrewd hits at you, my dear countrywomen. According, indeed, to this atrocious provincial (who, as I afterwards learned, had never been in Paris), you have very fine faces and not despicable forms; but you are cold, awkward, and, above all, you do not know how to dress. Most Frenchmen are like Rousseau; a rosy cheek moves them less than a rosy ribbon; and in describing one of their goddesses they expatiate with all the science of a milliner on the various details of her costume. Dress is certainly something, and I wish I could take the part of my countrywomen in this particular: but, no—nothing shall wring from me a word of untruth; and so I pass on to another part of my subject.

However, for the last time I repeat that Paris is a splendid city. One of its advantages is the com-

paratively pure atmosphere it enjoys. There are days when I have stood on the Pont des Arts and seen a perfect luxury of light shed upon the domes and pinnacles around; when the river sparkled and smiled as if it remembered the lovely scenes it had quitted, and the still lovelier it was going to greet; when the city in the island, with its great cathedral towers and Babel-like houses, and clump of trees set in front of them, like a nosegay on a lady's bodice, was touched with Venetian hues; and when the whole succession of palaces that formed the western perspective seemed too glittering for reality. Later in the day, if you turn towards the heights of Chaillot and Passy, following the southern quays, you may forget, so bright are the colours and so graceful the folds of the scenery, that you are not on the borders of the Mediterranean; whilst at sunset there is sometimes so gorgeous a flush, such a burst of brilliance behind the Triumphal Arch, that it would be vain to travel in search of anything more magnificent.

But I cannot proceed without making a remark *àpropos* of climate. It is the custom in France to describe England, London especially, as "a country of fogs." Now, though I am furiously national, I shall not pretend to say that there are no fogs in my dear native place; so many people would contradict me, though wishing that I had truth on my

side. But, after all, it is good to be better off than foreigners believe. Seriously and positively, it is an article of French meteorological faith that England is always covered by one dense mist; or that, at any rate, the sky is invariably cloudy. I remember being one day at Marseilles. A thunder-storm was coming on: the tops of the hills were totally invisible; the lower slopes could be but dimly seen; the population was going about holding on its hats with both hands; sea-birds were coming in with discordant screams; the ships in the harbour rocked; the sea tossed uneasily, and broke with a splashing roar upon the beach; towards the west a pale grey light showed where the sun ought to have been. I stood on a terrace, watching a shower of rain that was crossing the bay diagonally, and had just shrouded the Château d'If in its million threads. At that moment a French fellow-traveller came up to me, and said, with the most innocent air in the world,—"I suppose you would consider this to be a fine day in England?" At first I thought he was actuated by the pestilent spirit of mockery inherent in his race; but no, he was quite serious, asking for information: so I observed, that as corn and other things ripened in England, there must be a little sun now and then. He touched his hat apologetically. "Pardon—he had not thought of that." He was hurt to think that he had hurt my feelings,

and went away musing on my suggestion. Now, I am quite sure that the substance of his thoughts was not how odd it was for him to take a current joke—as, singularly enough, his jocular countrymen often do—for an undoubted fact; but whether it was not, after all, possible for corn to ripen in a country perpetually covered with fog, or if not, whether corn did ever ripen, &c. &c.

To revenge myself for French exaggerations I shall reveal the fact, that I have seen as thick fogs in Paris as I have ever seen in London: it is sometimes necessary to place lampions, or saucers-full of grease, with great wicks, that flare and stink, all across the Carrousel, in order that people may see their way. Less intense visitations are frequent; but having satisfied the basest passion in human nature, I shall admit, that in general the air of Paris is clear and pure. If you go out or *return home* early in the morning, it is really delightful to see the forms of the great city coming gradually out in the grey light, and looking ere the sun has risen like the dim pencil-dashes of a half-finished picture of Canaletti. The general use of charcoal fires in the kitchens, and the lateness of the breakfast hour, contribute to keep the sky pure until far on in the day. Even then nothing more than a slight haze collects in winter, just sufficient to give a peculiar character to the sunsets. Gradually, however,

the use of coal is coming in; people mix it with the wood: so that we need not despair of being able at some future day to say "dingy Paris" as a retort to "dingy London." Perhaps our dinginess may then be a tradition; for the Cincinnatus of Diplomacy has taken up the matter, and has put his hand to chimney-pots whilst waiting for a call to put it to treaties.

For many reasons Englishmen are almost afraid to speak of the Thames. They remember a favourite proverb of Sancho Panza, and by common consent let alone their great river, which they have changed into a sewer. The French have not quite the same reason for silence. No Arab talks with more respect of the Nile than the Parisian of the Seine. That stream is supposed to possess peculiar properties. It is *eau de Seine* here, *eau de Seine* there. Latterly great excitement has been created by the arrival of a flat-bottomed steamer from Bordeaux, and it is becoming fashionable to talk of Paris as a sea-port. One of the papers—the "Presse," I believe—has announced that Paris has at length nothing to envy in London. During the summer months the Seine is now covered with large floating cold-baths, in addition to the permanent warm ones. There are swimming-baths for men, and others for women. Formerly this division did not exist, and within this century crowds of both sexes have been seen disporting together in the Bains Vigier. Even at present,

in the same baths, the refreshment-counter is kept by a young woman, of whom the dripping bathers buy sausages and rolls. I have often felt inclined to remark on this circumstance, but have been withheld for fear of being called *pudique;* one of the contemptuous expressions applied in French literature and conversation to Englishmen. I might console myself, however, by reflecting in what vocabulary "modest woman" is an insult. Seriously, however, if it were my duty to lecture a great nation, I should tell them that one of their great moral diseases is their utter loss of the delicacy they so much despise. Even as a matter of taste they should try to cultivate the feeling, too much weakened everywhere, but which still remains sufficiently strong with us to enable us sometimes to blush. This feeling is valuable, both in arts and literature. By its means we appreciate shades of expression, which would otherwise escape us; allusions, the grace and coquetry of style, strike upon us with their full force; and tender ideas are seen flying to the willows afar off, instead of being coarsely cast unzoned before us. I may have here touched upon the secret why most English writing seems addressed to youths and women; whilst one might almost imagine that all French literature aims at irritating the blunt sensations of worn-out men. But this has taken me a long way from the banks of the Seine.

It is rather surprising, considering that there is no fleet of steamers, that boating is not a more common amusement than it is. The French, however, are not fond of athletic exercises. They are more prone to learn to manage the pistol and the small sword, in which even counter-jumpers are proficient. The greatest bodily exertion they take is to play a game of billiards, constant practice at which gives considerable freedom to the motions of their arms. Riding is perhaps less followed than in any other country, which accounts for the fact that the French are the worst horsemen in the world. A few *élégants* show off before the ladies in the Champs Elysées.

The gardens and public promenades of Paris on fine days are certainly among the most magnificent in the world. My plan does not require me to describe them, and I shall merely echo the regret of the sentimentalists, who complain that the necessities of civil strife have disfigured the great alley of the Luxembourg by a series of barrack-sheds; so that, instead of the voices of children at play, the promenader is disturbed in his reflections by cries of "Present—fire!" or sees lines of red-legged bumpkins training for the field of glory. M. Toussenel informs us, in his witty essays on ornithology, that since this villanous change the ringdoves that used to frequent the gardens have taken flight for the dis-

tant woods, where they are waiting until democracy shall restore the place to them and to lovers. There still remain some ringdoves in the Tuileries; and in most of the public and private gardens blackbirds and thrushes, nightingales and bullfinches, are to be found.

One pleasant feature of Paris is that here and there, even in the densest quarters, you may see, peeping over lofty walls, or at the bottom of some tunnel-like archway, fragments of groves, which, on nearer acquaintance, will be found to be cooled by fountains and adorned by statuary. Romancers exaggerate them into parks, but as a rule they cover only a few square yards. In the Faubourg St. Germain, it is true, there are some delightful gardens of considerable extent, where one may walk by moonlight, and listen to the buzz of the mighty city around. The French are passionately fond of flowers, which indicates a delicacy of taste that they must try to preserve. Those who cannot enjoy the luxury of a plot of ground make gardens in green boxes on their window-sills, or buy pots of sweet basil, the heliotrope, nightshade, jasmin, and mignonette, at the Quai aux Fleurs. On certain days of the year—the Ste. Marie, for example, every third person being called by that name—the streets of Paris resemble a fragrant Birnam Wood. Everybody is moving about, bearing gigantic bouquets or portentous pots

of flowers; for it is the custom to make presents of this kind on such occasions. The imperial flower is the violet—a singular desecration of that modest child of the woods.

Even from what I have already said, it will be seen that the external aspect of Paris is very unlike that of London. I might go on enumerating points of difference, as Touchstone says, "eight years together, suppers and sleeping-hours excepted." At the corners of all principal streets you may always see a group of stout fellows in caps, blue trousers, and braided jackets, with a brass plate and a number. These are commissionaires, or messengers, ready to run on errands, to carry love-letters, to go to the pawn-offices while shamefaced poverty lingers round the corner, to assist in moving, to black your shoes, &c. Their honesty and punctuality used to be proverbial, but I have lately heard that it is sometimes unsafe to trust them with a letter to which no answer is required. In 1849 an attempt was made to establish a Parcels' Delivery Company, the service to be performed on foot; but it failed.

Parisian omnibuses, except in the matter of speed, are as superior to ours as a *calèche* is to a cart. They are broad and commodious. The conductor, sheltered by a projecting roof, and dressed in a decent-looking uniform, communicates with the

driver by a string; a machine counts the number of passengers. There are a couple of brass rods along the roof, to enable you to get in and out without stumbling; half the seats are divided off by arms. When the vehicle is full, a board, with the word "*Complet*" upon it, announces the fact—not jeers and blackguardism, as is sometimes the case on a rainy day in England. The public pays without being asked a few minutes after entering; and the ridiculous sight is never seen of a stout old lady keeping fifteen passengers, fierce for dinner, waiting whilst she fumbles for halfpence in a glove. Formerly there was a good deal of conversation carried on in omnibuses, as well as in railway trains. Now everybody remains disagreeably silent. If you hear voices raised above the rumbling of the wheels or the shaking of the rails, they are sure to belong to English travellers. We are supposed to be taciturn; but it is quite a relief in travelling to escape from the company of a set of fellows, who look at you askance, and fancy you are a spy if you want to talk, into that of our chatty countrymen. I believe a similar change has lately come over the whole Continent, which is thus changed into a huge Dionysius's Ear.

Paris cabs are paradise—still with the exception of their slow-going. Every ride within the barriers, short or long, is paid for at one fixed price, according

to the quality or size of the vehicle. A tariff is fixed up inside. The driver gives you his number when you enter. This number is now on the first page of a little book containing advertisements, information about railways, &c., the use of which is authorised by the police.

The cabs of Paris generally belong to companies. Their number is not limited by law; but the prefect of police is very cautious in augmenting it. He is generally governed by the increasing number of the population according to the returns. Although the prices are so low, ranging from eleven to fifteen pence, a cab is a valuable property. Five thousand francs are given for the number alone. The owners are subject to actions for damages.

It is only within the last half century that the police has taken the cab system under its care. Formerly, when free cabs were allowed to ply, the drivers were said to be often in communication with bands of robbers and assassins; and used sometimes at night to drive likely-looking victims into retired quarters, where their confederates waited. There was a curious report published. containing illustrative facts. However, it is said to have been purposely exaggerated, because it was drawn up in the interest of capitalists who wished to establish a monopoly. We can always find out grievances against anything

we wish to destroy. There are still some free cabs, called *voitures de remise,* which stand under cover, are a little dearer, but more expeditious.

Every class in Paris uses cabs. On a rainy day, if you go to a stand, you are sure to find yourself in competition with men in blouses and women in caps. This arises partly from low prices, partly from the fact that omnibuses take such circuitous routes, that they are comparatively useless on a sudden emergency. Besides, French people have a horror of umbrellas; which they regard, with some truth, as a ridiculous piece of furniture. A milliner takes a cab when she brings home a bonnet, and a washerwoman, dressed out neatly with a pretty bonnet on her head, uses the same mode of conveyance to distribute clean shirts to her customers. Why are washerwomen in England always dirty, and those in France always clean? This would make a fit subject for an academical essay.

The street noises of Paris are different from those of London. In no quarter is there that continual roar of vehicles that stupefies a stranger on arriving in our capital. Formerly there were two or three sounds very characteristic. The dealers in cocks for fountains or portable reservoirs used to go about sounding a trumpet, always to one tune—that of the song which celebrates the tribulations of King Dagobert about his pantaloons. The police have

forbidden this mode of attracting the attention of customers, as they have that adopted until recently by the water-sellers, who used to clang the handles of their metal pails as they went along; they are now compelled to have pails with fixed handles. Street venders are not prevented from crying their wares, but their number has been considerably diminished by an ordonnance intended to captivate the good will of the shopkeepers, which forbids them the use of carts drawn by hand.

Since the *coup d'état* there has been a total suppression of all national airs and songs. It is now rare to hear an organ in the streets. Immediately after the fatal days of June, however, the "Marseillaise" emigrated to London. Even if it were not forbidden as a measure of precaution, it would now scarcely create the same enthusiasm in Paris as in Jersey. It is out of date; and people would, if allowed, be much more inclined to sing the benefits of association and the identity of liberty and labour. "*Mourir pour la Patrie*" held its ground some time after the great revolutionary lyric had become unpopular, but has seldom been heard since 1849. During the latter days of the Republic the military bands played opera tunes, to escape the danger of political allusion. They are all now on the way to Palestine with young Dunois, or vowing in little hopping notes to watch over the safety of the Empire. "*Veillons au salut de*

l'Empire" is the musical *chef d'œuvre* of that period, disastrous to taste as to liberty. It is said, that for a few months after the *coup d'état* the Savoyards were allowed to play national airs on their organs once a-fortnight, in order that the transition might not be too violent. They have now gone over to London, to give employment to our police magistrates. It is to be remarked, that the Empire has not produced any songs or tunes but satirical ones. The Republic was more fertile. The people improvised the air of the *lampions* in February, and Pierre Dupont composed some of the finest lyrics and most stirring music than France can boast of.

Along the boulevards and at the corners of the principal streets are stationed newspaper-sellers, whose trade has considerably fallen off of late. Except during the few months in which France tried the experiment of perfect liberty of discussion, and was weak enough not to learn by intuition what we have learned by a hundred years of experience, these unfortunate people have been subject to all manner of persecutions. The great Constitutional party, which had got the majority in the Assembly, and whose fall is regretted by so many Englishmen, actually allowed the police to decide what papers should be sold in the streets; and accordingly, under the Republic, all republican journals were forbidden, and those only allowed that

represented the Orleanist, Legitimist, or Bonapartist factions. It was difficult to suppress the papers, but the object was sought to be gained indirectly by preventing their sale. The public, however, would not at first submit. Many newsvenders found it worth their while to carry on a contraband trade in republican journals. I remember, that on one occasion a woman came running into the passage of my house with a large bundle, which she threw into a dark corner. It appeared that a sergent-de-ville was in pursuit of her. She had sold a "National" at a shop round the corner, and had got away just in time. The sergent passed, looking to the right and left, but had not seen which way the poor woman had disappeared. By degrees the Parisians were wearied out by the difficulties thrown in their way. Some adopted the proper method of subscribing to the journals at the office; others went to the *cafés;* others ceased to read at all; and others submitted to receive the publications patronised by the Government. At present the number of papers published is very limited; it is gradually diminishing, and people are becoming indifferent as to which they take. No one looks at the leaders or believes the news. The few who really take interest in politics watch the variations of the Bourse, which may tell them how near or how distant is the anticipated catastrophe. Even these may grow tired of waiting.

Apropos, it is well to observe that the French seem never to have understood the principle of a street-police. The reason is, that they have always had a contempt for law, and respect nothing but force. They laugh at the staff of the constable, but cower before cold steel. In spite of my long residence in Paris, I never can help laughing when I see a band of fierce-looking chasseurs, armed with gun and bayonet, escorting a poor tramper with a child at her breast, or some shabby pickpocket. The means employed are too disproportionate to the end; it is like firing a cannon at a fly. In France, people do not say they will "call the police," but they will "call the guard." To do the soldiers justice — though this remark, I am told, is not quite so applicable now as it used to be — I must say that they seem to forget on these occasions that they have arms in their hands, and never resort to force but at the last necessity. However, being by position non-cognisant of the delicate distinctions of justice, when once their assistance is requested they fancy it to be necessary to arrest somebody: so that, if the accused escape, they generally seize on the accuser.

At night, patrols of soldiers move about the streets, warning ill-intentioned people to be off by the trampling of their feet. There is, however, a kind of street police, called sergents-de-ville; but

wonderfully different from our burly constables. They are a sort of Alguazils in cocked hats, and armed with long rapiers, who hang about the corners of the streets, ready to pounce upon sickly-looking children who may be singing for a sou, to lord it over fruit-women, to take the numbers of carts that commit delinquencies, and, above all, to seize upon any one who may express a political opinion. After midnight they may often be met creeping stealthily along in Indian file, on the look-out for malefactors. There was an attempt made in 1848 to substitute for these bilious-looking scarecrows a band of street police; but the chief innovation consisted in the use of a Calabrian brigand's hat, so that every now and then one might see coming round a corner figures like those which, at minor theatres, for eighteen-pence a-night, start out of the side-slips and advance in an odd, stooping posture, towards some single hero, who pokes at them with a pistol in an unaccountable way.

A friend of mine was once riding in an omnibus, when a person who sat opposite to him, pointing to a woman standing near the kerb-stone, selling some cheap article, said, "There is a woman who ought to be arrested." On being asked why, he replied: "Because she is selling without the permission of the police. I know it by the wandering of her eyes. I am used to that sort of thing. I

was once in the police myself. We are great physiognomists in that walk of life, and learn to estimate every one we see in the street, and place them in the social scale they occupy. We are quite a learned body. Every day I used to attend two lectures. The first, on municipal law, which I was compelled to go to every day—I and all my fellows; the second, on the art of drawing up a *procès-verbal*, or written deposition, from which I was let off when I became proficient."

As a rule, the police are hated, not only by those with whom they interfere, but generally by all classes. A workman never says, "There comes a policeman," but, "There comes a *mouchard*, or spy."

The fact is, these gentlemen cumulate both employments, and are much more active in pursuing political than other offenders. They know precisely what constitutes one of that frightful list of crimes invented by French legislation, in order to enable any government to pounce upon its opponents and put them in prison; and are said to employ all their leisure hours in reading the opposition papers, in order to discover if there be any phrase that can be construed into an attempt "to excite the citizens to hate and despise one another!" What fine work they would have in England, where it is becoming the fashion to accuse whoever differs from you on a point of diplomacy of being sold to some foreign power!

CHAPTER III.

The Reader introduced to my Lodgings—Moving—Economy of a Paris House—Cheerful Streets—M. Méry in a Passion—Madame Joseph—Duties of a Porter—Arrangement of a Furnished Lodging—Cheapness—French and English Comforts—Surveillance of the Police—Suicides—M. Proudhon—the Porter and the Lodgers—Unsettled Population—Commentary on French Manners—Personal Observations—Rents.

MANY of the topics over which my pen has thus lightly tripped will probably present themselves again. What has been said will give some idea of street manners in Paris. To be complete in detail would take a volume; and compendious pictures have so often been done, and well done, that I shall give no opportunity for a comparison. I endeavour to touch on those points which have been slightly handled, and which illustrate at the same time the transition period in which we are living.

Perhaps it may be as well now to suppose that my readers desire a rest, and will consent to accompany me into one of my lodgings. I say *one*, because I have obeyed the general law in Paris, and have been constantly on the move, though nearly

always within the circumference of a single house. I have lived on the front and on the courtyard, and on every storey from the second to the sixth. Sometimes I have crossed over the way, or made a short sojourn in some neighbouring street: but fate or habit has always brought me back to the same old place. I have thus become perfectly acquainted with my own quarter, initiated in all its mysteries; and there is scarcely one of my neighbours within a musket-shot of whom I do not know something—scandalous. In France, as elsewhere, evil reports are lighter than good ones, and come to the ear first.

I used to be very proud of my lodging on the second floor. *We* should call it, on the third; because, in France, immediately above the ground-floor, or *rez-de-chaussée*, is the *entresol*, equivalent to the Italian *mezzonino*. In old houses the rooms on this storey are generally very low, as if flattened by the weight of the superincumbent mass. Those that look towards the street are inhabited for the most part by the tradesmen, whose shops and stores occupy the ground-floor. In Paris, as in the East, nearly every hôtel or house is fronted by a row of shops, and the private entrance is under a large archway, or in a great courtyard beyond. I observe that this total difference in the arrangement of dwelling-places, which has a great influence on

manners, always strikes new-comers, especially ladies, so that it is worth mentioning.

There are a good many houses without a carriage entrance. Mine is one. Instead thereof, between a tailor's shop and a pastry-cook's, there is a broad, stone-paved passage, with a handsome double door of open bronze-work, closed at night, but thrown back all day long, as most doors are in Paris. This constitutes one of the peculiar features of the streets, and gives them all that appearance of gaiety which is so much missed in London out of the great thoroughfares. It is not possible in Paris to turn suddenly out of a street, in which business roars like a torrent, into a cheerless double row of houses, whose inhabitants seem to have just received news of the arrival of a pestilence or an invading army. The French complain bitterly of our unsocial architecture. Our dismal streets and closed shops on Sundays irritate them into all kinds of libellous speculations; and M. Méry, one of their writers who has undertaken to initiate them into the picturesque parts of our manners and customs, grows perfectly frantic at the sight of a long row of closed doors with impudent-looking knockers. He remembers the saying that the Englishman's house is his castle, and exhales his indignation in these words: "Order reigns in the streets of the cities, but brigandage triumphs between four walls under

the inviolability of the house and the protection of the law. Every closed door may conceal a crime, and this door external justice is forbidden to open. Respect to clandestine crime! War to public crime!"

I will admit that the open doors make the streets of Paris look more lively. In fine weather, of evenings, the porters and their gossips sit or stand there; and there are constantly people going in and out. The passages and staircases are, indeed, the private streets of Paris. If the street happen to be full of sun, you can scarcely, on entering my house, see the brass watercock in the passage, and are obliged almost to grope up-stairs. Do not imagine, however, if you have any felonious intentions, that your coming is unobserved. A short turn brings you in sight of a glass door on the landing of the entresol; and before you reach it, Madame Joseph, the worthy *concierge*, is sure to be on the look-out, ready, if you are a stranger, to ask your business, in a tone sometimes needlessly imperative. Madame Joseph understands no nonsense. Her eyes are accustomed to that half-light; and before you can make out her sex, she has subjected your physiognomy to a searching analysis. If your intentions are not strictly honest or moral, there is no chance for you. The best way is to go down faster than you came up. She can tell at once, she says,

whether you are most like a robber or an oyster. Even if you come to dun an unfortunate lodger, great cunning only can gain you permission to ascend. However, the wearers of hats are treated with some mercy. Bonnets that recklessly present themselves might as well apply at the door of a monastery or a dissecting-room. Pleas of relationship are futile. Cousins, and aunts, and nieces are seen through in a moment. They have a peculiar way of blushing and stammering as they speak, which expresses their degree of affinity at once.

It must not be supposed, however, that either in my house or in any other the porter has a recognised right to interfere with what kind of visitors the lodgers receive. Madame Joseph is a peculiarly arbitrary character, and has strict ideas of propriety. She wages dreadful war on all temporary *liaisons*. And yet victory is not always on her side. There are occasions when defeat becomes a necessity. It is useless even for her to resist the influence of a whole system of manners. Young men — and the house is almost entirely inhabited by bachelors — will, as Ophelia bears testimony, make rendezvous at their lodgings. Why give warning to one when his successor will do the same, or worse? The greatest reformers are obliged to be content with diminishing grievances, and Madame Joseph has reason to pride herself on the fact that she presides over the

quietest and best-regulated house in which students ever congregated.

But we shall have more to say of porters and portresses. Being in my company, even if you are a lady, you may come up without hesitation: you have only to fear a toss of the head as you go down, unless I accompany you, which politeness will forbid me to omit. Pray observe, that on each landing there are three doors. On the entresol, besides the porter, live two families — one the pastrycook's, the other the tailor's. The former have divided their single room into two or three by partitions. How they manage to exist in so small a space no one can tell. At one time there was the husband, the wife, an aunt, a marriageable daughter, a little girl, and a servant. Thousands of families in Paris pass some twenty years in this mean way, that they may save enough to retire upon and buy a little cottage in the country; but they contrive so to cramp and confine their minds as to be incapable of enjoying what they have worked for. Most of the other chambers and apartments are, as I have said, occupied by young men. There are five rooms, one above the other, over the porter's lodge, looking into a courtyard, narrow and deep, like a well. In the front of the house there are five apartments, consisting each of two diminutive rooms and a kitchen, and an equal number of single chambers.

Above these is an artist's studio, with two or three garrets.

Here is my hermitage, on the second floor above the entresol. Let me hope you will be as pleased with it as was I when first introduced. With my pecuniary intentions, I should have started back in dismay had they shown me into such a place in England. It was a *multum in parvo*. There were two windows, looking upon the street. Opposite these was the bed, standing in an alcove, not let into the wall, but built like a three-sided room within a room. Behind it was a corridor, serving as a communication between two small square spaces, shut in by glass-doors, nicely curtained; one playing the part of an ante-chamber, the other of a dressing-cabinet.

"Most convenient arrangement," observed a Frenchman, with a knowing smile, as he inspected the locality. "If an importunate visit interrupt a pleasant one, the pleasant one can slip into the dressing-room, pass round behind the bed, and so——"

I confess the idea had not struck me.

The bedstead was of solid mahogany, with a mountain of mattresses, an elegant red woollen coverlet of network, and heavy crimson curtains running on a mahogany rod with mahogany rings. A prince might have been content with it. I was.

The floor of the room was formed of small, narrow zigzaging boards, brightly waxed; and all the furniture shone with elbow-varnish. The window-curtains, the sofa, the Voltaire, were all crimson, and nearly new. I missed the musty smell that had driven me out of so many rooms. There was a large mirror over the mantelpiece, a handsome time-piece under a glass-case—invariably found in French furnished lodgings—elegant candlesticks; everything, in fact, that was required for convenience or ornament. Between the two windows stood an article of furniture that won my heart immediately—a mahogany clothes-press, with a full-length mirror in the door. I at once determined to set up my rest there; and after a little faint bargaining agreed to pay forty-five francs for the room, and ten francs for service per month.

Of course, custom diminished my admiration; or, at least, induced me to express it in this form—that for eleven shillings a-week I could not get anything so good as that in London. For the information of ladies I shall add that everything was included, from linen to tea-spoons; that I was invaded every morning at a fixed hour by a couple of people, one of whom made my bed, whilst the other waxed and polished the floor; and that I was not expected to throw any perquisites in the way of the porter's family. They were generally three—husband, wife,

and husband's sister; but in busy seasons they were obliged to call in the assistance of a servant.

It is common, I think, to exaggerate our superiority over the French in the possession of the comforts and conveniences of life. Certainly our great houses, ugly as they are outside, are most perfectly fitted up. But, perhaps, comfort is more generally diffused in Paris. A bachelor living in a single room is fifty times better off in France than he would be in England. Small families contrive with limited incomes to surround themselves with elegances—which are the comforts of the mind. Oil lamps of handsome shape are in general use, and composition has almost entirely displaced the odious tallow. Many respectable people with us hide their floors with threadbare carpets. The French waxed parquets are always neat. Even the stone flooring is painted and polished. Above all, a French bed is superior to an English one. The use of straw mattresses has gone out. They are superseded by what are called *sommiers,* or solid mattresses with a wooden framework and springs; price from thirty-five francs upward. Above this is placed a wool-stuffed mattress, then a feather-bed, and then another mattress. No French people will sleep on down. In winter, a large light cushion, called an *édredon,* is placed upon the bed, instead of additional blankets. Opinions differ about fire-places. An

English grate, well polished, is certainly cheerful-looking, but the brass-headed dogs and the crackling wood fire mixed with coal have also their advantages. The great lack is of fenders, which are only now coming into use amongst middling people. In my room, as throughout the house, the fire-place is furnished with what is called a trap, by lowering or raising which the draught is regulated. By the way, little boys still mount the chimneys, and sing national songs when they get to the top. The French, who talk so much of progress, never dream of those minor improvements by which the small oppressions of society are redressed.

Furnished houses are kept under very strict surveillance by the police. The ostensible object is to prevent them from becoming the resort of thieves and other disreputable characters. But the real object is to enable the Government to carry out its favourite system of intermeddling with and directing, as far as it can, the lives of the citizens. Every keeper of a furnished house is obliged to have a book, in which lodgers are requested to sign their names on entry. The penalty exacted for an omission of this formality is very severe. The house may be shut up, and the master put in prison. Spies constantly go about to examine the books, and see that no omission is made. It is surprising that the French, in all their changes of government,

have never thought of abolishing this impertinent interference with their private affairs. If you suggest such a thing to a Frenchman, his mind instantly puts itself in what may be called a government posture. Individual interests cease to occupy him. Society—and this singular mode of thinking has had more influence on the history of France than at first sight appears possible—is at once subordinated to the police, instituted for its protection. He thinks merely of the best theoretical means of enabling the authorities to lay their hands upon criminals, and cannot balance in his mind the conflicting advantages of perfect liberty and complete surveillance. His tendency, in this as in all other things, is to ease his own shoulders at the expense of the State; which, in his conception, is a being whose duty it is to perform every possible act which does not absolutely require individual exertion.

Perhaps, from the very construction of their houses, the idea which is so displeasing to M. Méry, that a man's dwelling should be inviolable, could never occur to the French as it has to us. They have, however, the same conception in an absurd form. If a Frenchman knows that a fellow-creature in a room upon the landing on which he lives is dying, by accident or by suicide, his impulse is not to kick open the door, but to send for the commissary

of police, that this may be done with due formality. The law is the only permitted burglar. This reminds one of China, where no man will endeavour to save a drowning person for fear of being found in company with the dead body, and being hanged for murder. Indeed, the resemblance is still stronger. I know an instance in which a foreign medical man was prevented from touching the body of a woman who had leaped out of a window, in order to ascertain if life were really extinct. The body was left lying in the street for two hours—of course, under the guard of soldiers with fixed bayonets and a lantern (it was some time after midnight), until the commissary chose to get up.

In spite of all the formalities I have mentioned, supposed to be directed so effectually against dishonest persons, the detective police of France, even assisted by the system of passports, is less effectual than ours in England. Nothing is more common than for a well-known criminal, or escaped convict, to slip through the fingers of the police for years. Political offenders are proverbially invisible. When M. Proudhon was condemned to three years' imprisonment, he publicly announced that, as he had some family affairs to settle, he did not choose to be arrested at once; and he remained in Paris more than a week at large, in spite of all the ability of the police, furious at being thus set at nought.

I remember, at that time, being present at a *soirée* where this matter was discussed. A Legitimist deputy, with great appearance of confidence, announced that the great Socialist dialectician had run away in order to avoid suffering for the cause he had so long advocated with his pen. Some imprudent friend and admirer of Proudhon immediately exclaimed that this was not true, adding, "I saw him walking this morning in the Palais Royal with M. ——." Next day the worthy Legitimist, anxious to get his colleague arrested, went to the Chambers, and taking the Minister of the Interior aside, informed him of what he had heard. The Minister said, "I must not ask M. —— (also a deputy), if this be true, because he will not answer me; but I will send some one to worm the fact out of him." M. Proudhon's friend, however, was too wary; and this disgraceful affair had no result. The anecdote is worth recording, because it illustrates the virulence of party-passions in France, and the total want of gentlemanly feeling carried into political contests. If an English member of Parliament could be condemned for writing a smart article in a paper, what colleague could be found to assist the police in laying hands on him?

Very few houses in Paris, furnished or not, are without a porter. The number of these officials is said to be forty-five thousand. In some cases they

are retired soldiers with small pensions; in others, they eke out their living by working at various trades: and it is common to see a little bill hung up, saying, "the porter cobbles," "the porter tailors," "the porter goes of errands," &c. Generally, the pay is so low that it would be impossible to live on it. There are some "doors," it is true, worth twelve hundred francs; but eight or ten pounds is more commonly given. In houses like mine, the porter earns a good deal by acting as servant to the various lodgers; in others, his *complaisances* of different kinds are paid. He is, of course, lodged free, and certain privileges are attached to the office. For example, he receives a present called the *denier à Dieu* when a lodging is taken—say, from two to five francs; when wood is brought in, he claims the largest log for himself; and, of course, is not forgotten on New-year's day.

The porter and his wife are often at war with the poorer lodgers. This state of hostility seems to give a zest to their existence. Armistices, are, however, frequently declared; and I have observed that the portress is for a short period the bosom friend by turns of each of her female lodgers—perhaps just long enough to worm out all the scandal current about the remainder.

A porter has many ways of being disagreeable. Perhaps it is necessary to explain, for the benefit of

the untravelled, that after nightfall, when the door is closed, egress and ingress are afforded by means of a string communicating from the lodge to the latch. A belated tenant is known by his ring, and unless he be in the good books, is sure to be kept cooling his heels until his patience is exhausted. Moreover, letters are delivered by the postman to the porter, who is bound to pay the postage, and who, in very extreme cases of antipathy, contrives to forget the missive in a drawer for several days. I have been rather fortunate myself, but, as a rule, the porters do not bear a very good reputation; for they are accused of fawning to the first and second floors, of treating the third and fourth with impudent familiarity, of being insolent to the fifth, and tyrannical to all above. As in most countries, however, those who pay well are well treated, and those who are behindhand with their rent come in for sauciness and neglect.

There are four periods of the year at which the streets of Paris assume a peculiar aspect, being filled with vans, carts, trucks, and porters, moving to and fro under burthens of furniture, in a state of greater or less preservation. This is in the first halves of the months of January, April, July, and October—for the French quarter ends on the eighth for small lodgings, and on the fifteenth for large ones. At these times, saving exaggeration, one half of the

population shifts its quarters. It has been calculated that the average number of lodgings to let amounts nearly to thirty thousand. Some few great families still retain their hôtels, and leave them in charge of a servant, or of the porter, when they go into the country at the period fixed by the law of fashion. As a general rule, however, even the rich change their lodgings often. The poor and the middle classes are essentially migratory. Few persons inhabit the same house for more than a year. Many change oftener. The reason of this inconstancy they cannot explain. I attribute it in a great measure to the uncomfortable system of living which they have inherited from their ancestors, and which they are forced to continue by the peculiar construction of their city. The French are fond of freedom, and no man that lives in lodgings can be free. He must, to some extent, be under the tyranny of his porter, or of his neighbours. This tyranny increases with time. It is not felt for the first quarter, it is tolerable the next, but it soon becomes past bearing, and the victim determines to move, hoping to be at more liberty elsewhere. Long leases are almost unknown in France.

I have already threatened to speak a good deal of myself, in which habit the public have hitherto been kind enough to indulge me. If I do so, it is not because I fancy my movements to be particularly

interesting, but because narrative clings close to the surface of fact, and omits none of its sinuosities; whilst dissertation, looking from a greater distance, takes in the grand outlines, and purposely neglects minor details. This book will be a running commentary on those pages of French manners which I have perused. It is based on some thousands of notes, written down at various times, or floating about my brain unwritten. The idea of describing one's place of permanent residence is always an after-thought. Perhaps a stranger, arriving with all his senses thrown back on their hinges to receive impressions, may gather a completer picture, though with colours and forms somewhat confounded. I have only observed French society piecemeal, or, rather, French society has forced itself upon my notice under certain aspects. These I will endeavour to describe, without seeking by special study to fill up gaps or accumulate illustrations.

Many things, however, that are valuable to know are not good to be told. Thousands of facts and observations are now crowding upon me, from which I must select with care. Where, too, is the limit between a record of experiences and a confession? This question troubles me, and will explain many hesitations and lacunes as I advance. Let it not be imagined that I hint myself the hero of any ro-

mantic adventure; but a confession touches others than one's self. These pages will be published within twelve hours of Paris, and friends will peruse them eagerly in search of reasons why they should hate me. Some suppressions and some artifices will be required to disappoint them.

I have always found, that the observations on manners which most indelibly impress themselves on the memory are those afforded by the incidents of ordinary life—the events that please or displease, that make one uncomfortable or happy—not those collected as an indifferent spectator. For example, I believe that I am perfectly acquainted with the mysteries of housetaking on a small scale, in all its branches, whilst the great formalities connected with the transfer of property and other solemn acts of life, although they have been all detailed to me, have left but a confused reminiscence. As much as possible, I shall keep to the first class of facts, only abandoning them when absolutely necessary.

I have already mentioned the rent of my lodgings. The apartments in the same house containing a little sitting-room, a bed-room, a kitchen, and an ante-chamber, never let furnished, are from 340 to 360 francs per annum. They pay what we should call assessed taxes, being over the rent of 300 francs. The rooms looking on the courtyard are from 140 to 160 francs a-year, when

let unfurnished; when furnished, from 30 to 35 francs a-month. The little rooms, or *mansardes*, at the top of the house—(a mansarde is, properly speaking, a room in which one or more of the walls incline inwards, according to the slope of the roof) —pay 100 francs a-year. In some quarters a lodging may be obtained even much below this; but it will, of course, more resemble a cupboard than a room. Many young men of respectable position live in these upper rooms, which, however, are generally occupied by workpeople. Young girls who work on their own account as milliners, those who prepare bottines for the shoemakers, waistcoat-sewers, &c., generally have their nests in these far-up places, the windows of which they convert into hanging gardens, often in defiance of the police, which has a strong objection to flower-pots in such a position.

CHAPTER IV.

French and English—Mutual Ignorance—Celts and Anglo-Saxons —Our Countrymen abroad—Beards—Beau idéal of an Englishman—Londoners at Boulogne—Politeness—Odd Prejudices —Sight-seeing—How to collect Information—French Mistakes —International Sharp-shooting—A Cockney at Table—Vulgarity—The Pocket Dictionary—Scene of Reconciliation—The Sabbath—Morality and Immorality.

I HAVE sometimes wondered that France and England should have been so long neighbours without being better acquainted with each other's manners and character. The reason may be found in the constant hostility of their governments. We cannot appreciate people that we fight with: it is against nature. Savages do not shake hands like cultivated ruffians after what is called a fair fight, and there is enough of the genuine savage in us all to make us hate those by whom we have been beaten, and despise those whom we have beaten. Friendly intercourse has increased of late, but the good effect has only been partial. Many excellent people think it proper to make show of abandoning ancient prejudices. This is something; but at bottom there is

little real sympathy, and hereditary dislikes, thinly skinned over, are always breaking out in fresh places. Cæsar and Antony could not meet without speckling their friendly dialogue with recriminations. We are still divided, not only by conflicting interests, but by inherited prejudices. The proportion of our independent judgments to the opinions we derive from tradition is indeed wonderfully small. Most minds are made up of hereditary scraps; and I have often been surprised to find in my own case convictions that were the result of reasoning, conflicting, almost in vain, with other convictions that already existed, and came I knew not whence. Most Englishmen and most Frenchmen seem to be in this doubtful state about their mutual characters.

As an instance of the manner in which the leaders of public opinion in France perform their duty, I will mention that M. Emile de Girardin, who, after all, is perhaps the first political writer of his country, not many months ago allowed one of his correspondents to publish a grave statement that England at this present moment oppresses the Irish "*because* they are of Celtic race and not Anglo-Saxons." Let us check the smile which this absurdity provokes. Is it not probable that every day we commit blunders nearly as great about France? I do not pretend that in the course of these pages I shall not furnish M. Pascal Duprat with materials for triumphant

recrimination. I shall try, however, to avoid those mistakes which have their origin in prejudice and passion.

From what I have observed of English travellers, I think that their powers of observation are strong, whenever they are not too much disturbed by the idea of their superiority. I have met many of my countrymen abroad who seem to have prepared themselves to observe by a long course of self-examination — models of impartiality, good faith, and desire of knowledge, which no other nation can produce, because no other nation, not even Spain, can forget the pride of its origin. An average Englishman, however, has still a lurking belief in one article of his school-boy creed; namely, that he can beat two Frenchmen. This belief does not develope itself commonly in fisty-cuffs, but in a tendency to depreciate everything he sees. He is constantly reversing the first sentence in the "Sentimental Journey:"— "They manage these things much better in England" is the translation of his thoughts. There is no state of mind more hostile to the acquirement of truth. If he really wished to profit by his experience abroad, he would try and furnish himself with the idea that England is not in all, though it may be in most things, the first country in the world. At any rate, Contempt is a bad fellow-traveller. There are, perhaps, also some small features in our character

and manners which are or seem ridiculous. A few of our habits are not precisely in accordance with the laws of Nature. If "Thou shalt not wear a beard," for example, is an article in our decalogue of fashion, we have scarcely a right to confound our neighbours with the lower creation for holding another faith.

The frame of mind in which some Englishmen set out on their travels, with reference to this capillary department, brings them into droll contact with the French, who do not understand a joke of which they are the subject. I remember to have seen a Londoner, with his face blazing with good humour, playfully pull the ear of a prim bearded waiter in a café on the Boulevards, because the American grog came not quick enough to his table. The act was meant as good-humoured notice of the half-brother of a baboon, and the unhappy gentleman was astonished and grieved to find that his jocularity was taken as an insult. It need not be added that his vast hemispherical chin was scrupulously shaved. Our *beau idéal* of a human being, indeed, requires that he should be tightly encased in clothes, strapped, buckled, braced; and, above all, that two blinkers should conceal the contour of the face. There is certainly something highly respectable in this costume, although it would not be suitable to a prophet or an apostle. We require, also—no doubt on phi-

losophical principles — that the upper lip and a certain portion of the chin (individual taste is allowed some latitude in this respect) should be clean shaved; whilst it is necessary, and ladies are particularly severe on this point, that an enormous bunch of hair — the envy of boys and the despair of artists — should stick out on either side. An English ghost must be a strange-looking object. I wish, for reasons all of which need not be told, that La Fossette, when she drove the word "whisker" out of the court of Navarre, had driven the thing itself out of the world. This, however, is merely a picturesque fancy, for, as I have said, a full-dressed Englishman with a tun of stomach is stupendously respectable to look at. All I ask is, that my countrymen should not be surprised at being recognised a hundred and fifty yards off, just as they themselves would recognise an Iroquois or a Chinese. I was going to say something about the costume of English ladies, but I have already been impertinent on that point, and shall only add, that they do not require the profusion of ornaments they are so fond of, and that we should not love them less if they condescended to diminish their circumference. The idea of buoyancy enters certainly into the definition of an angel; but what sentimental emotions can be roused by a balloon?

When Englishmen land at Boulogne or Havre,

they are immediately taken in charge by the police; at which they seem surprised, not knowing the customs of the country. I have no doubt that Frenchmen, on reaching the opposite shore, are rather hurt at noticing the perfect indifference of the authorities. Each nation has its ways. On finding itself between two lines of stern moustached individuals, armed with muskets, the sturdy English spirit of independence is at once ruffled, and there is sometimes an uncalled-for display of feeling. Calm London tradesmen, accustomed to be obsequious to aristocratic customers, quote Lord Palmerston's saying, "*Civis Romanus sum*," and make all sorts of disagreeable remarks upon their guardians. Some, looking big through their shirt-collars, talk in an off-hand way about those d—d Frenchmen. The police understand that one word of our language. At any rate they know that, according to Locke's expression, it is not meant for commendation. They revenge themselves by treating their prisoners almost as churlishly as would Custom-house officers in England. The travelling Cockney, impatient to collect observations on men and manners, immediately begins to talk of the "cussed" want of politeness to which he is subjected; "and in France, too!"—this is said with a bitter sneer—"by the most polished nation in Europe!" As if, however, in order to illustrate the truth that opinions are nearly always hereditary,

or borrowed, and that experience cannot modify them, the same individual takes the first opportunity of delivering himself of an observation, to the effect that the politeness of Frenchmen "consists more in mere forms, whilst we are at bottom really more polite." Without examining how polite we are at bottom, let us remember that politeness is only a form. However, it is useless to make this objection to a solid Englishman. He will only stare, look puzzled, and repeat his old observation in the same words, with a little louder voice. Our honest countrymen are, perhaps, not alone in believing that repetition is reasoning. At any rate, they have some darling aphorisms, which it would give them more pain to be deprived of than of half their teeth.

The French are certainly an immoral nation — there is no doubt of that; but they are not so systematically immoral as some of our scampish tourists seem to suppose. A wild Cockney once arrived at Boulogne, and having safely escaped from the police and the female porters, found himself in an hôtel. It was midnight; the waiter sleepily gave him his candle, but instead of retiring to rest he lingered in the passage, and said, with an expressive grin, "*Fil de chamber, eh?*" He evidently laboured under some romantic illusion as to the nature of the institution of *filles de chambre* in French hôtels. I happened to be passing on the way to my room, and

—being a Cockney myself, and therefore sympathetic with his distress—endeavoured to explain the matter to him; but he only looked cunning, and said, "D—— immoral nation this, sir: so I'm told!"

Many of the odd opinions which neighbouring nations entertain of each other are probably founded upon real facts, the purport of which is misunderstood or exaggerated. We have often been convulsed with laughter by accounts of huge mistakes made by Frenchmen with respect to our manners and customs. It is useful to learn that many of us fall into strange errors in speaking of France. Being a nation of travellers, we have frequent opportunities of correcting our grosser mistakes; but these opportunities are not so fruitful as they might be. We rush along, seeing sights—the most dreary occupation to which man can be condemned—the treadmill of curiosity—and forget that it is worth while to notice the people whom we elbow at every step. We study national characteristics in the persons of hôtel-waiters, and guides, and are not uninfluenced by the length of the bills we have to pay. Most Englishmen, therefore, return from their travels with half-a-dozen new prejudices added to those they took out with them. I could give fifty instances of their mode of proceeding. One will suffice. A gentleman of my acquaintance travelled in twelve hours and a half

from London to Paris, where he remained a week, had an interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, left his card on the Minister of Public Works, saw M. Cousin pass in a cab, got hustled in a vast crowd that had turned out to see some fireworks at the Barrière de l'Etoile, and came back believing, or saying, that he had associated with the public men of France, and mingled with the people even in their sports and pastimes. "I have collected," quoth he, "a vast amount of information, and shall certainly publish a volume." If he had stayed a "fortnight," he might have been entitled to do so, that being the amount of time which is now considered sufficient for an appreciation of the character and condition of a people.

I once explained a variety of the mistakes made by foreigners about England to a French gentleman of some literary acquirements. I told him, for example, that by the Chiltern Hundreds was *not* meant an office of "high honour and emolument near the person of the Queen;" that every Englishman who engaged in politics was *not* entitled to be called "Sir," and, by the way, that it excited merriment in us to read of the doings of Sir Peel and Sir Graham. Proceeding from these minor matters, I added that it was a mistake to suppose that the English aristocracy was a powerfully constituted body, that levied taxes directly on the rest of the commu-

nity—though they are always trying to do so indirectly; and observed, also, that there *was* such a thing as a middle-class in England, and that the country, therefore, was *not* divided into classes of extreme wealth and extreme poverty. He was unprepared to contradict me, and indeed rather believed what I said than otherwise, but could not be persuaded of the obvious truth, that so long as a nation kept itself in such a state of ignorance as to require these corrections, it was incapable of pronouncing philosophically on our national character. The French are very fond of attributing to themselves a power of generalisation. They believe that they can divine the character of a people by a single trait. Perhaps they have been led into this error by finding that some of their great writers affect to paint a nation or a period by a fact; but they forget that this fact, if it really answers its purpose, has been sifted from amidst a thousand.

Of course, in alluding to the ignorance that prevails in the two countries of one another, I speak not of the *élite* but of the average amongst the educated. Many a Frenchman, whose mind is stored with all the new and poetical ideas of the age, and sharpened by the severe discipline of the Polytechnic School, will sneer at the eaters of "rosbif" and potatoes, at the speakers of a language which is not written as it is pronounced, at the people who have

founded an empire by low trickery and mercenary soldiers, Swiss and others—a Genevese regiment is reported to have assisted in gaining the battle of Alexandria; and an Englishman who has fed, or ought to have fed, on the first literature of modern Europe, who is every day busy with the great themes of civil strife, has little better to retort than that Johnny Crapeau is a very good cook, makes elegant gimcracks, knows nothing about governments except how to destroy them, and lives chiefly on frogs. All these little absurdities, even when accumulated,—all this international sharp-shooting,—may not seem of much importance, but I have noticed that in daily life, if from some accident of intercourse we accustom ourselves to ridicule the foibles of a friend, it is often difficult, at the most critical moments, to treat him with that respect which we should ourselves desire to show. Many a man has been prevented from playing a serious part in life by a nick-name.

It has already been laid down as an axiom by the most cheerful of travellers, that an Englishman does not travel to see Englishmen; nor ought he to travel to eat English food. Yet many a Cockney sighs after the first day for the solid dishes of his native land, and keeps himself in a state of perpetual misery lest he should be poisoned by what is set before him. He makes faces at the red wine, fancying

it to be charged with cholera, mistakes its tart flavour for sourness, and if he venture on a draught, calls immediately for an alcoholic antidote. Even with this protection, for some hours all the faculties of his mind set guard upon his stomach, waiting for the first disastrous symptom. Sometimes, however, he complains of the pale brandy, and asks piteously for genuine British. "None of your *coniac* for me." There is a constant trade carried on between London and Paris in articles doctored for the English taste, and it would appear that the French pharmacopœia contains no ingredients that will act on our rebellious organisations.

A regular green Cockney, who has perhaps made his last meal off that indescribable mess called beefsteaks and oyster-sauce in some villa overlooking Battersea Fields, when he first sits down to a table d'hôte, thinks it necessary to grumble at everything put before him; partly, it is true, in order to "overhawe those rascally Crapeaus." That he may be perfectly understood, he expresses himself by pantomimic display, pretends to be sick, makes wry faces, calls for a glass of "ho" to wash his mouth after some "infernal" mess, and so contrives to convince himself that he is a very humorous fellow, and the company that he and all his countrymen are brutes. Of course this extravagant conduct is not pursued by all or by most Englishmen; but the mild and

gentlemanly pass unperceived, whilst the others attract attention and are taken as types of our character. The French are only too much inclined to despise us. They seize on these examples with delight. It is a common saying amongst them, that in manners, and everything that constitutes real civilisation, we are the most backward nation in Europe. The Abbé Lamennais once repeated this remark to me, in a tone of regret and profound conviction.

In the course of the dinner, Cockney will probably refer to his pocket vocabulary, and, guided by the hints it gives him of Parisian pronunciation, will playfully call the waiter a "patty couchon." By the way, one of these valuable guides tells the munificent traveller to ask for a dozen of Rhenish wine in the following words: "Ungh douzangh dah vangh dah Rangh." It may easily be imagined what kind of conversation can be kept up with such assistance, especially when the information is given that the French language is spoken through the nose. Our Cockney snorts all through the dinner most unintelligible gibberish. When he has got a little merry he wants to "take wine" with the ladies, according to our singular custom. They understand that he means to be polite, and decline with a smile that puts all sorts of fantastical fopperies into his head. He calls them "jolly fams," and gets into better repute by sending champagne glasses all round the table,

to the tune of —— the expense. At dessert, unless his thoughts revert to the "fil de chamber,"—wine makes the English sentimental—he volunteers a song, and delicately gives "Rule Britannia," to which some commercial traveller retorts by "*Jamais en France l'Anglais ne regnera,*" which, by some singular bias of taste, has been adopted almost as a national song, although it recalls a period of humiliation. Meanwhile Cockney grunts painfully as he fumbles with his book. Having caught the word *Anglais*, he thinks he is listening to a compliment. But not finding words to express his delight, like an inane animal that he is, he starts up, and seizing the singer in his arms, shouts "Viv' la France!" The company, with great tact, respond "Vive l'Angleterre!" and Cockney sits down wiping his brow with his napkin, and imagining that he has effected a lasting reconciliation between the two countries. There is nothing more absurd than the boisterous enthusiasm which some Englishmen think it necessary to affect as soon as they find themselves in company with Frenchmen. Every one is liable to fall into exaggeration who endeavours to assume a character.

It is worth observing that our most staid countrymen, even prudent and pious Presbyterians, who would shun Cremorne Gardens as a sort of antechamber of the infernal regions, and who are cla-

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morous for the observance of the Sabbath, immediately on arriving in Paris hasten to inquire after those famous dancing-places of which they have heard so much, and to mix in all their boisterous merriment. As they are to be seen in their greatest glory on Sunday, that day is generally chosen; so that the same men who charitably excommunicate their fellow-creatures for endeavouring to give the working-classes the opportunity of visiting the Crystal Palace without an improper sacrifice of time, trusting to the incognito of distance, promenade their portly forms through crowds of half-mad students and lorettes at Mabille or the Château des Fleurs on the mellow Sabbath evenings of summer. I may here remark, that if amongst the dancers at these places you observe any one whose indecency is brutal, who imitates all the coarse gestures of the Brindejoncs, without being able to catch one atom of their grace, he is almost sure to be an Englishman. "I am not a virtue," said Mademoiselle Papillon, pushing away a fat, red-faced Cockney, "but I am a woman." It may seem odd to say so, but this offensive conduct arises from the strict moral education of the English. They cannot conceive degrees of impropriety. Fortunate is the nation of which this can be observed with truth. I complain of its results merely from one point of view, and hope that I may ever have reason

to complain. When Englishwomen cease to be chaste they astonish foreigners by their extravagances, and fill them with strange notions of our country; but this is no reason for relaxing the rigidity of that code, according to which the first step from virtue traverses an abyss.

CHAPTER V.

Our Judgments on the French—The "fickle" Nation—Historical Parallels—Our Mobility—Jokes on the French—Routine in Literature—Friendships—Religion—Wars of Conscience—M. Mignet—Deliberative Assemblies—Aversion to Travel—Nostalgia—Female Emigrant—Our Roughnesses—National Dislikes—A bluff old Sailor—Liberty and Equality—A Legitimist Confession—Political Sympathies—Trees of Liberty—Plantation of Crosses—Absurdities of Fanaticism.

In my paternal solicitude for the comfort and improvement of young English travellers on the Continent, I would put them on their guard in one particular especially. Let them distrust every axiom, every cant saying, every epigrammatic judgment, which is current in England on the subject of France. Many of our notions are so deep-rooted, that the most candid persons unconsciously applying them are incapacitated from arriving at truth. As far as I can discover, they are chiefly based on misconceptions and prejudices. They are rather the representatives of our own state of mind with reference to the French, of traditions of past times, of applications of local or national ideas very far removed from original principles, than the result of

any correct analysis, or even of that instinctive perception which sometimes takes the place of reason, and performs its office with rapidity and success. Of course, the truth of this remark depends on the truth of my conception of the French character. I shall set down some of the common notions, and do my best to show how far they are at present incorrect.

The very first observation which an average Englishman makes, when asked what he thinks of the French, is, that they are "fickle." The same epithet is generally applied to the people in general, in every country, by those who wish to appear profound in social philosophy. As far as regards the French, the accusation — if it be one — seems to arise from the fact that they have several times changed their government during the last sixty years, and indicates either great ignorance or great carelessness of speculation in those that make it. We might as well call Nature fickle, because of the innumerable varieties of aspect which she assumes during the march of the seasons. The political changes, as they are called, that have taken place in France, are simply the successive phases of one great struggle between the two opposite principles of liberty and authority; and if there has been a constant alternation in the forms of government, this arises, partly from the radical incapacity of the French mind for

political affairs, partly from the fact that the opposing parties are equally balanced. No one ever thought of calling the soldiers who fought on either side at Waterloo, fickle, because victory seemed now to declare on one side and now upon the other. French society is, and will be for some time, in a state of war. We may deplore, we may stigmatise; but it shows a wonderful negligence of observation to detach the effects, namely, the successive changes of government, from the myriad causes which produce them, and to say, "Lo! what a fickle nation is this!" The real reason why the French have often changed their form of government is, that they have not yet been able to invent anything that will suit them. If we were as foolish we should still be more fickle.

I do not like historical parallels, as they are called. They generally confound our ideas of two periods, enlightening us on neither. But, in this case, I may at least allude to one that might be drawn. During the middle ages, our changes of dynasties, our insurrections and perturbations, were at least as extraordinary as those of our neighbours. When the Reformation came, what followed? We changed our religion by statute as much as by conviction; we then deposed a king, and condemned him to death; we submitted to a military tyrant, who claimed the legitimacy of genius; we returned

to the old reigning family; we expelled that family a second time; we witnessed two subsequent rebellions, one of which was barely unsuccessful; and after having passed through a period of unspeakable degradation, in which literature and art partook of the miserable depravity that had invaded our politics and our morals, were fast approaching a revolution when the French frightened us into comparative tranquillity. Our neighbours, in the meantime, had not changed their religion nor their form of polity, in spite of their fickleness; but submitted with incredible patience to a long series of oppressions. It is unnecessary to pursue the parallel farther in detail, for this is quite sufficient to suggest the unphilosophical mode of reasoning of those who pretend to make a comparison between English stability and French mobility. Thank God we are not stable. We have nothing of that Chinese faculty about us, however the lovers of immobility may try to persuade us to the contrary, in order to influence our actions for their own purposes. The fact is, that there is no nation on the face of the earth in which customs, manners, laws, and opinions succeed one another so rapidly as with us. A history of the variations of the English mind would be a marvellous undertaking.

As a proof of the relative rapidity with which the two nations change, I may notice that the tone in

which we used to satirise the French in the time of Shakespeare is considered applicable now by many; whilst we should not understand the jokes made against us even in the last century. Perhaps, however, we have inherited the jokes of the Elizabethan age without caring for their application.

In other departments besides politics I do not find that the French are peculiarly fond of change. In literature there has, perhaps, been no nation so enslaved to routine. The whole history of the freezing of the French language in the shallow reservoirs of the Academy, and the ridiculous incidents of the great schism between the romantic and classical schools, are illustrations sufficiently remarkable. Until within the last thirty years or so, people tried to write exactly in the style of the age of Louis XIV. A new school arose, but the mingled horror and admiration which its innovations excited confirms my opinion. These innovations were often trifling in themselves, consisting in the introduction of new metaphors, for example, not permitted in the dictionary. "*Cela ne se dit pas*" was considered, and is considered still, by many, sufficient to condemn any phrase, however poetical. The natural tendency of the French mind is to shun innovation. It always seeks the yoke of rigid rules, and nothing offends it so much as the transgression of them. Everything is judged by academical precedent. I remember a

curious instance in which good M. Coste, the commentator of Montaigne, justifies his author for using the expression, "a tide of men," by quoting the authority of the Dictionary of the Academy. Voltaire has written somewhere, that no metaphor is allowable that cannot be painted; upon the strength of which dictum we are told, that to say "a torrent of emotions rushed over the heart" is improper, because it would make a ludicrous subject for a painting! The tone of nearly all received criticism in France is of this calibre; and when any innovation is made, it is only by means of the exertion of authority on the part of some popular writer who has acquired autocratic power in his art. The strange limitations so long imposed upon dramatic genius go still further to prove my thesis, as well as the uproar which the insignificant innovations made by Victor Hugo and others produced. I cannot here develope this point more fully, and, indeed, it is unnecessary, because every one acquainted with French literature and criticism will be able, on these slight suggestions, to remember innumerable instances in proof of the statement, that in the exercise of their imagination, or rather in the choice of their forms of literature, the French have exhibited an aversion to change, which might have degenerated into Chinese immobility had it not been for the constant impulse imparted by more active-minded neighbours.

It may be objected, that if not in political matters, or in literature, the French are, indeed, fickle as individuals; and I think that this charge has been brought against them ever since they have existed as a nation. It seems to me most unfounded. As far as I can understand it, it means that the French are inconstant in their affections, and especially in their friendships. I should rather be inclined to say, if I did not shrink from insulting so large a section of the human race, that, being incapable of affection or friendship, it is impossible that they should be changeful in this respect. But so sweeping an assertion would be absurd. I may venture, however, to maintain that self-consciousness, self-admiration—egotism, in a word, enters so strongly into the formation of their character, that the French are less capable of identifying themselves, their feelings, and their interests, with others than many neighbouring nations, and that it is the absence of this power, allowing them to multiply a number of weak relations, and to drop a few here and a few there, as occasion requires, that has been mistaken, still for want of careful examination of causes, for fickleness. I must guard against its being supposed that I mean to envelope the whole of the French nation in this judgment. There have been in it remarkable instances of friendship and devotion, but they are sufficiently rare to do honour

only to human nature, and cannot be taken into account in discussing the distinctive character of one division of it.

In another very important point the French have by no means exhibited any remarkable tendency to change: I mean, in religion. Whilst all the surrounding nations that have any pretensions to be civilised have for the last three hundred years been torn to pieces, as it were, by conflicting sects, ever varying in doctrine, form, and aspect, France has remained, taken altogether, completely possessed by Catholicism; in as far, at least, as it has retained any religion at all. The proportion of the reformed sects or churches to the population has remained wonderfully small for a people usually charged with a tendency to escape from the influence of old things and to run after novelty. It is true, that for many hundred years the spirit of infidelity has been gradually spreading; but on examining carefully the progress of the nation we shall find, that if the phenomenon of a multiplicity of jarring sects could present itself for a time amongst them, the majority of the people would call out for silence and repose, as they did when the discussions of the Clubs in 1848 roused them for a time from their torpor.

It is a curious instance of the impenetrability of the French mind, that, after all the teachings of history, even literary men cannot understand how

it is possible for people to fight from religious motives. They admit, because such facts cannot be questioned, the great conflicts of the sixteenth century; but they always seek for a political concealed under a religious impulse, and are obliged, therefore, to accuse a whole generation of the grossest hypocrisy. M. Mignet, one of the most elegant writers and purest public characters of France, is so little capable of escaping from this mental routine, that, in narrating the history of the Reformation in Germany, he allows scarcely any force to the cravings of conscience, and can see no sources of action but rival ambitions and interests. This able man is a singular example, moreover, of the intellectual indolence prevalent in France. He has undertaken to describe the secret workings of the German mind without knowing anything of the German language; which is nearly as bad as the case of M. Adolphe Dumas, who writes clever five-act comedies to expose the foibles of the English character, without ever having crossed the Channel or being able to read a word even in a newspaper. I have somewhere else mentioned the anecdote of the Frenchman who said to me, "We cannot allow strangers to impose their language upon us; we aspire to impose our language upon them."

All nations that have been really remarkable for mobility of mind, for the love of novelty, the dispo-

sition to seek adventures even in politics, have made deliberative assemblies a necessity of their existence. What would an Athenian have been without his Agora? what would an Englishman be without his Parliament? The Session is our Day; the Recess is our Night. In France, the experiment of public debates of business has been tried; and most people have got tired of them. They formed too great a claim on their intellectual industry; they too constantly presented them with new materials for thought; every day some darling old prejudice was discussed and shaken. A vast number of people who fancied themselves civilised shouted out for silence, for repose; and talked nonsense about "the feverish agitations of democracy." Before the *coup d'état*, men of all parties went about complaining of the disturbance caused by the *Bavards*—the twaddlers of the National Assembly—not knowing that they were conspiring with the enemy of liberty, and, in their eagerness for quiet, forgetting that the only difference between a citizen and a slave is that the former gives his leisure hours to politics and the latter to bovine somnolence.

And this brings me to notice another quality which is generally attributed to the French: I mean, activity. Possibly the mistake arises from the fact that they are often seen gesticulating; and people have argued from the constant mobility of their

arms, shoulders, and eyebrows. I believe, on the contrary, that the French are one of the least active nations on the face of the earth. Their stay-at-home qualities are notorious. Few Frenchmen cross the frontier except on compulsion, and most think it a great feat to travel some fifty or sixty leagues. There is no people so subject to nostalgia as the French. This is one of the reasons why exile is so terrible a punishment to them. "I have seen young soldiers," says Alibert, "who remained for hours watching the sky in the direction of their native country. With whatever delights a nostalgic patient is surrounded, nothing produces any effect upon him." To an Englishman, the whining and puling of a Frenchman for his native country seems ridiculous. At any rate, though connected with amiable feelings, it is an evidence of feebleness of character. Pierre Dupont, in his song called "The Female Emigrant from France," pleasantly expresses the misery of a fine lady driven away from Paris by the events of February:—

"Pardonnez, chère Angleterre,
Si je vous hais sans raison;
Ailleurs qu'à Paris la terre
N'est pour moi qu'une prison.
Je trouve la France infâme,
Je la déteste en mon âme;
Mais je veux revoir les nids
Dont est brodé Notre Dame,
Qu'on me ramene à Paris."

This is partly the reason why the French form opinions so erroneous about foreign nations, and why I am inclined to scold my countrymen, who begin to misbehave as soon as they cross the Channel. They act like great boys who have just escaped from school, and the Frenchman looks at them with wonder, and puzzles himself to understand how a nation composed of such individuals can play a great figure in the world. There is nothing so disgusting to the French as the style of talk adopted by some English travellers, especially by women. *"Qu'est ce qu'il dit, cet homme?"* This is the way in which they express themselves in speaking of a porter, instead of *" ce Monsieur."* Even a Duc de Montmorency would at least say, *" ce brave homme."* The French are as irritated by our coarse forms of expression as was Mrs. Quickly at being called a woman. We are an enigma to them. Those who try to get at an explanation of our greatness invariably fly to our guineas. But how did we get our guineas? Where did our prosperity come from? There the boat leaves them. It is the old story of the elephant on the tortoise. They give the matter up in despair, and hate us because they cannot understand us.

Innocent Englishmen often write to newspapers and to their friends, giving accounts of stammering conversations which they have had with Frenchmen, who have politely assured them that they may

"sleep at home at ease,"—that France has no intention whatever of making a piratical attack upon us. It could not think of such a thing for the world! All this is very absurd. These assurances mean nothing. There is at bottom, in the great majority of Frenchmen, a rooted dislike of the English. They sometimes conceal their feelings, from interested or other motives. I remember an amusing instance. When I went to see the Bay of Aboukir I was politely received by the French superintendent of the quarantine station, a bluff old sailor. He took me up to the top of his house to view the position of the French and English fleets during the battle, and described the whole affair with great animation. But when he came to the grand manœuvre by which, according to him, the battle was won, he forgot the urbane cosmopolitan tone in which he had commenced, and went on to say, as he drew a map of the battle on the terrace with a piece of charcoal, "*Ces —— d'Anglais*—I mean, those brave fellows of Englishmen." Nature had spoken out. He raised his head, after an abortive attempt at swallowing his words, and said, "*Après tout*, I can't be expected to sympathise with them!"

I have insisted in this chapter on the neglect of many English persons to obtain accurate notions of the state of French society, because this neglect has very important consequences. It is the cause why

we often misjudge the conduct of their political parties, why we imagine them to be agitating for mere chimeras, and why we blame them for not taking the same political course with ourselves. It is a common remark, that the French care more for equality than liberty. The reason is, the profound impression created by the existence of privileged orders up to the end of last century. The great relief felt by their destruction has, perhaps, exaggerated in the minds of the French the benefits of equality. It must not be supposed, however, that their present state of mind is entirely moulded by tradition. A little after the Revolution of February, an enthusiastic Legitimist, the Duc de V—— secretly believing, probably, that the time of his party would soon come, began to talk of the absurdity of supposing that he had not advanced as well as the rest of the world, that he and his fellows were not prepared to accept the results of progress, &c.

"Of course," observed a friend of mine, "it will be impossible now to recall the legislation that declares all Frenchmen to be equal before the *law?*"

"Before the *king,*" replied the Legitimist.

The change of one word creates a chasm between the old world and the new. The king can raise or abase his subjects; the law is inaccessible to partiality. In England there is no need of such distinctions, and we should, therefore, endeavour not

to judge of French doings by the same principles as ours. A thousand other differences might be pointed out, and if these are not well understood, we shall continue to regard the most reasonable of French politicians as madcaps, and ignorantly deprive the professors of our own ideas, under forms altered by circumstances, of the valuable assistance of our sympathy.

What amusement was created in England by satire of a well-meaning but fantastical party for planting trees of liberty under the Republic! These eccentricities were supposed to be peculiarly characteristic of democracy, and such members of our press as were opposed to that principle used to say, with a power of exaggeration that even Parisians might envy, that all business was suspended (although people ate and drank, and bought and sold, as usual), and the whole of the population employed itself in setting up poplar-trees in the public places. This mode of celebrating a victory, however, is not peculiar to any party; nor is it so absurd as our annual persecution of Guy Fawkes, or our City masquerade. It was principally the work, under the Republic, of idle boys and youths, with some unemployed workmen, to humour whom a few functionaries and priests joined in the sport. Very often the whole thing was set on foot by a wine-dealer, who wanted to attract customers. After the inva-

sion of 1815, the Royalist party celebrated its triumph for several years under protection of foreign armies, in a precisely similar way, except that gigantic crosses were substituted for poplars, and blasphemy replaced political enthusiasm. Missionaries were sent to every part of France to organise these demonstrations. They were received with pomp by the authorities of various cities; the theatres were shut up in their honour; choirs of youths and girls were formed, of course carefully divided into groups according to social rank, and taught to sing canticles to popular airs. The Canticle of the Confessional was appropriately adapted by some conscious priest to the tune of "Jeunes amants, cueillez des fleurs;" and the Canticle of Religion was oddly set to the music of the revolutionary song, the "Chant du Départ." Even the words were taken, so that fanatical crowds went about roaring:

"La religion nous appelle
Sachons vaincre, sachons périr;
Un chrétien doit vivre pour elle,
Pour elle un chrétien doit mourir!"

A shop was opened at each place for the sale of crosses, chaplets, medals, books, and other objects, all converted into amulets by blessings; and a Royalist journal announced that, at Avignon for

example, "*business was done* to the extent of a hundred thousand francs." Catholics, without any irreverent intention, have a singular aptitude for speaking of the doings of their church in this trivial manner.

The first task of the missionaries was to induce the population of the cities visited to make an *amende honorable* for the sin of having permitted the Revolution. Then came the plantation of the cross, sometimes forty or fifty feet in height, performed with elaborate ceremonies, in the presence of the authorities of the town and of the clergy. In one place (Clermont), twelve hundred men, nobles, chevaliers of the Order of St. Louis, tradesmen, cultivators, and workmen, in turn carried this gigantic symbol; which, however, got into position, it is hinted, almost by a miracle. "The cross rose gently, and by movements so well contrived, that it placed itself, as of its own accord, on the pedestal, and sunk into the socket as by a natural and necessary inclination." Sobs and screams from the excited crowd accompanied the ceremony.

"How amiable were the people that day!" cries the pious narrator. The women, not being able to carry the cross, rushed upon the missionaries, and snatched from them their handkerchiefs and cravats, even took pieces of paper out of their pockets, to keep as relics. There was nothing so extravagant as

all this in the plantation of the trees of liberty. Perhaps in neither case is there matter for ridicule. It is in the character of the French to make such external manifestations of their joy. I shall add, that in many places of the south of France I have seen these crosses still standing, with colossal representations of our Saviour, executed in an ignoble style, and shocking the eye by an elaborate representation of suffering humanity, without one trace of the divine character. The trees of liberty, which formed a pretty ornament, have already been cut down.

CHAPTER VI.

National Enmities — Manners — Ignorance of the French about England — Popular Notions and Delusions — Our Eating and Drinking — No Vegetables in England — M. Viardot's Misfortune — Shepherds — English Women — M. Chateaubriand — Criticism — Our Literature — We have no good Writers — Mr. Macaulay—Reputation, how made—The Language of Birds—Curious Check to Population — Napoleonic Ideas — Strike of Engineers—Feeling towards England—Our Mission—M. Toussenel—Thistlewood—Bethnal Green—Great Exhibition—Contempt—Telegraphic Signals—French and Humanity—Why the French despise our Nation — Analysis of the Spirit of Mockery — Humiliation of France — Chamfort and De Tocqueville.

I HAVE already said that there is a feeling of enmity still existing in the minds of the French against England, however much they may desire to deceive us and themselves into believing the contrary. Exceptions may be multiplied, but enmity, or rather dislike, is the rule; and those gentlemen who rely not on the influence of policy, but on any romantic feeling of brotherly affection which has risen up in France for England, as a protection against invasion when an opportunity occurs, will

find themselves deplorably mistaken. I am sorry to be obliged to say this, but I am perfectly persuaded that the present Emperor could take no better means of acquiring popularity than to make a piratical attack upon England. Without seeking for the cause of the inimical feeling I allude to in historical reminiscences, which have their weight, we may find sufficient explanation in the opposite character of our manners. People hate those who do the same thing in a different way. Manners are made up of a variety of little details and circumstances, which do not directly come from any great principle in our nature. They are generally the expression of our littleness.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

As we deviate from simplicity, we multiply points of dissemblance. Savages all the world over are alike; but how vastly different is a civilised American from a civilised Japanese!

The ignorance of the French about England is of a different kind from that of the English about France. No Frenchman knows anything about our history, our institutions, our language, our literature, our manners, our statistics, the productions of our island, its geography, the races by which it is inhabited, or the position we hold in the world. We loom upon them, as it were, through a fog.

They imagine us to be at once very great and very absurd. According to the popular idea, London is England, and stands on the borders of the sea, or rather in the midst of the sea. It is a kind of smoky Venice. "*Comment — il y a des champs en Angleterre!*" exclaimed a lady with astonishment, when she had passed the Nore, and saw fields on either hand. The way by which ideas enter into the minds of the great majority of men is singular. They generally bear little relation to the words or ideas that suggest them, and are the creation of prejudice or accident. The popular ideas in France about England, and about France in relation to foreign countries, constitute a curious mixture of abstract ideas and general and particular facts, all occupying the same line and invested with the same importance. London is always wrapped in fogs; there are no vegetables in England; no fruits ripen; English are all perfidious, and all sailors; England is a nation of shopkeepers, a nation of Machiavels, a nation of independent gentlemen and originals; France is admitted by every one to be the first country in the world; all foreign women fall in love with Frenchmen at first sight; the French, by their character, are eminently fitted to found colonies; the French language is at once the most correct and the most masculine; the French are eminently a musical people; Napoleon was crushed by over-

whelming numbers and three combined armies at Waterloo; the battles of the Peninsula were all French victories; the French are the causes of the independence of America,—a notion that runs through the whole of their literature. England has one great writer, *perhaps*—namely, Shakespeare; the English press is scurrilous, whilst that of France is urbane. These statements are not merely popular delusions, but are all found in grave histories or scientific reports. I might collect thousands of instances from French books and newspapers, of ludicrous mistakes. A few, however, will suffice. It is, perhaps, nothing that a Frenchman never uses an English name, or quotes an English expression, without making some strange error, for this may be laid to that broad-shouldered class the printers, to whom I shall certainly attribute any mistakes of that sort that may be found in these pages. That eloquent and ingenious writer, M. Méry, will scarcely plead this excuse for introducing a set of jolly companions, rejoicing over a pint of *half-naff*, and it is not probable that *wiski* is a trip of the compositor. He must be answerable, too, for attributing queer tastes to our low English thieves, whom he represents as first drinking gin and then absinthe. Our worthy neighbours entertain the oddest possible ideas of our propensities in the way of eating and drinking. We are supposed to spend

one half of the day in swallowing tea, and the other half in gorging potatoes. M. Audot, in his notes on the gardens of the south of Italy, goes out of his way to inform his readers that the English are not only accustomed to eat radishes as a dessert, but even carry them about in their pockets to crunch on the public walks. As I have said, it is commonly believed that there are no vegetables or fruits in England, and encouragement to this notion is given by a scientific writer in the "Constitutionnel," who, however, only says that our vegetables do not ripen as they ought to do. A short time before the article appeared, I had had a grave discussion with a lady on the subject, and indignantly asserted that the English soil *did* produce cabbages and cauliflowers. She kept a copy of the paper, and handing it to me as I went in, triumphantly exclaimed: "There, did I not tell you that there were no vegetables in England?"

"Madame," replied I, with a seriousness worthy of a better cause, "if there are vegetables that do not properly ripen, that is a proof that there *are* vegetables, &c."

A clever writer named Viardot has recently given an account of his sporting experiences in England, and tells us that a worthy country gentleman—a regular sportsman—took him out for a morning's shooting, and at midday gave him a cup of tea and

a thin slice of bread and butter. "Not even an egg!" he indignantly exclaims. I scarcely recognise in this the exuberant hospitality of my countrymen, and must think that M. Viardot wrote from his prejudices, not from his experience.

These are slight matters, but all matters are slight when isolated by analysis. Let us go on. "I have traversed England from end to end," says M. Méry, "and I never saw but one shepherd. He was a young man, well dressed and well gloved, reading the 'Morning Chronicle' under a tufted ash." The same writer has the impudence to describe England as the land of women of easy virtue—*la terre des femmes faciles.* I am well aware that there is a great fund of romantic feeling and ill-regulated enthusiasm in young English ladies, which sometimes leads them to go to lengths of familiarity with foreigners that they would never think of with their own countrymen; but I am quite sure that M. Méry's remark is a boast intended to imply, what I doubt, that he has been in England, and that there he has had reason to boast of the kindnesses of the fair sex, which I deny.

A curious chapter might be written on French criticisms on English literature. M. Chateaubriand, who translates "fast by the oracle of God"—"*rapidement près l'oracle de Dieu,*" has some elegant speculations on the passage in which Hamlet speaks of

Yorick in these words: "That I had kissed I know not how oft." He says that Hamlet here delicately alludes to Yorick as a female character, and maunders dismally about Margaret of Scotland and Allain Chartier. He cannot conceive the beauty of the plain, simple statement, that Hamlet, when a boy, used to kiss the merry gentleman who played with him and made him laugh. M. de Balzac, by the way, has the advantage of me in one particular. I really do not know what he alludes to when, speaking of a dancer named Malaga, he says, "Her snout, as she called the lower part of her face, had, according to the expression of Shakespeare, the verdure, the savour, of the muzzle of a heifer." Every day, however, the French take the names of our great writers in vain. Perhaps it will please Mr. Thackeray to know that a French critic describes him as "an honest literary Cockney, who likes to relate things as they are," referring to the book on Ireland. There would be no end of this chapter, however, if I were to enumerate all the odd things which the French are accustomed to say about our books and writers. To show their intimacy with our literary feats, it would be sufficient to mention that M. Stendhal informs his readers that it is absolutely impossible to write a merry page in English. I know where this idea comes from. Voltaire has said that our style is influenced by biblical reading,

and his disciples therefore imagine that all our books are sermons.

Generally speaking, it is the opinion amongst the enlightened in France, that, leaving out some brilliant exceptions,—say Shakespeare and Milton,—we possess no great masters of the pen; no literature, in fact. M. Cousin has remarked somewhere that there is no good English prose-writer. M. Philarête Chasles, exaggerating the merits of Hume's style, explains his perfection by observing that he wrote in English-French; and critics who wish to be complimentary to Mr. Macaulay say, that he writes so well because he has a French mind—*l'esprit français*. We must not be surprised, therefore, if the public remains in utter ignorance that England possesses an uninterrupted series of historians, philosophers, poets, and miscellaneous writers, at least equal in number and in genius to what any country can bring forward. Our inferiority in reputation arises, perhaps, from the same cause that has produced our originality. Literary men in France not only unite in schools and coteries, but, in spite of individual rivalries, have almost always exhibited, as it were, a corporate spirit. They hold together and praise one another. Indeed, half the celebrities earned are factitious. Many names have remained in the public memory far inferior in value to our third-rate forgotten essayists; and probably many isolated men

of mark have been neglected. Perhaps a little more fellowship amongst us in England might be beneficial.

I was turning over a clever series of essays the other day by a medical writer, when the following passage struck me as worth copying:—"It is interesting to observe," says M. Alibert, "that the languages of different nations are sometimes only an imitation of the cries of the animals that frequent the country in which they are spoken. My illustrious friend, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, has himself made this observation. He remarks, for example, that the language of the English resembles the *whistling of the birds* which inhabit the shores of their island; he adds, that the Dutch imitate the croaking of the frogs with which their marshes abound; that the Hottentot clucks like the ostrich; and that the Patagonian reproduces the melancholy roaring of the sea." We have here two able writers uniting to repeat the remark which uncivilised nations make about dialects they do not understand. Every common Arab will describe Europeans as employing the Language of Birds. Vulgar and ignorant people in all countries think it droll that there should be anybody who speaks otherwise than themselves, but I believe that in French literature only will these odd prejudices be found repeated from ordinary conversation.

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It is, however, in political matters that the French make the most stupendous mis-statements, for here their prejudices come to the assistance of their want of information. M. Chateaubriand has said, and I have heard his testimony quoted, that "England is under the melancholy necessity of shooting every year whole populations that are in want of bread!" This odd trait in our manners puts us below those islanders of old who used to poison everybody who presumed to overpass the age of fifty years. They, at least, were impartial. Everybody was cut short as soon as he became incapable of work. We put people to death when they get hungry! I am ashamed to be called an Englishman!

A good many of the ideas prevalent in France about England are derived from some of the petulant remarks of Napoleon. "It is a singular thing," said that great man to Lord Amherst, "that England *has bought everything and is ruined.*" Very singular, indeed! The authority acquired by the phrase, merely meant as an insult, "England is a nation of shopkeepers," is well known. We may be perfectly sure that it lurks in the mind of every writer who undertakes to criticise our political institutions.

The French are fond of speculating on the decline and fall of England, and every little sign which seems to indicate danger to us they eagerly

snatch up. Instances might be multiplied to infinity. I shall here merely allude to the stupid delight exhibited by the Government papers when the news of the famous strike of the railway engineers came over, a little while after the *coup d'état*. Grave political economists at once began to explain that Socialism had invaded England, and that the good ship was about to founder. On the same principle, any check received by the English in India is at once magnified into a great defeat, and gives occasion to all sorts of sinister predictions, in which joy is ill-concealed under a tone of commiseration. It is necessary, however, to qualify these remarks in some degree. Of late years the real Republican party—whose principles, after all, only correspond with those of our extreme Radicals—have formed a genuine affection and respect for England; and I heard influential members of it indignantly exclaim, with superfluous sympathy, when a destructive invasion of England was talked of, that it would be an infamous act—high treason against civilisation. This is a cheerful sign, because the party to which I allude, though now in a decided minority, is evidently delegated by fate to take the guidance of France, probably at no distant period. It has committed stupendous errors,—the greatest of which was to lay itself open to ridicule,—but it may have learned by experience; and it can at any rate boast of the absolute purity

of its intentions and of the comparatively good private character of its leaders.

Many of the Socialists, who are monarchical in their tendencies, and who look upon constitutions with contempt, hate us with the hatred of the Bonapartists whom we once destroyed—almost with that of the Legitimists whom we placed in power. A pleasant writer of the school of Fourier, which has, perhaps, done as much for Absolutism as the Jesuits, some few years ago published a book called "The Jews, Kings of the Epoch." According to him, all revolutions and all heresies come from England—"the impure Babel, the great shop whence issue all venomous doctrines and all venomous drugs." He goes on to prove that the English are "the scourge of God," from the fact that God called up an enthusiastic virgin to drive them from France, as He had called up one before to drive out Attila! He considers the struggle between the good and the evil principle in nature to be personified in the struggle between England and France. "I execrate the English aristocracy," he cries; "not as a Frenchman but as a Christian, as a man;" and then he talks of Nankin and Copenhagen, of St. Jean d'Acre and Barcelona. "The English aristocracy," he proceeds, getting mystical, "adorns itself with the only character of grandeur which agrees with its infernal policy, so admirably described by the author of

'Paradise Lost'—an English poet." This pleasant gentleman has just published a delightful volume called "L'Esprit des Bêtes," and is himself well worthy of occupying a chapter in his own book.

"Who has not heard of the conspiracy of *Tilsewott?*" cries M. Sarrans, showing his familiarity with our domestic policy. Nothing shall persuade me that he wrote "Thistlewood," and that this comical error must be laid to the printer.

When the French visit England, their first care is to hasten to Bethnal Green or Whitechapel, to gloat over the misery there to be found. In a sort of vague, dreamy form, the information collected by our Sanitary Commissioners has been carried over to France, where it causes the breasts of all true patriots to swell with delight, on the same principle that we might be pleased at finding that one of our enemies was afflicted with a cancer. The French keep their eyes so constantly fixed upon our cancers, that they fancy us to be all cancer. Even those who affect to be friendly are fond of dwelling on our failings, and when they praise, do it as awkwardly as if they were walking in tight shoes. Any one who has heard the wonderful stories of the visitors to the Great Exhibition will appreciate what I say. In every narrative they must have observed an under-current of satire—an Addisonian tendency to depreciate. Make the necessary exceptions, and then be sure that

the feeling of the French towards us is one of contempt.

Now, contempt implies an assumption of superiority. He who expresses it must be satisfied with the relative excellence of his own position. I regret, therefore, that the French remain in this state of mind, because it is hostile to their own improvement. I have this very moment seen a curious illustration of what I say. A sea-captain writes to a paper complaining that French ships are not furnished with telegraphic signals, whilst our ships are. He hastens to make a curious distinction. "Let us not *imitate* the English," he says, "but let us *take from* them what is good." Without this salvo, he knew that his suggestion would be derided. Vanity takes a peculiar form in the French. They not only look down upon others, but look up to themselves. French politeness, French wit, French genius, even French commonsense—these are their superlatives. I suspect, however, that the reason is that they do not trouble themselves to find objects of comparison. Their indolence raises round them a wall more impenetrable than the Chinese. Whatever be the cause, however, they resemble that curious people in self-adoration. No one can have read their political speculators without noticing that they invariably identify the French nation with humanity at large. Humanity was enslaved before

'89; humanity rose and asserted its liberty; humanity has been in an uncertain state ever since. After 1830, when France began its first serious attempt to learn the lesson of constitutional government, it became the fashion to apply to ideas of personal liberty, liberty of conscience, trial by jury, freedom of the press, the name of French ideas; and this continued up to the *coup d'état*, when the Dictator, perfectly well versed in political history, suppressed them all, as of foreign importation. Most persons, probably, believe that "humanity" fell into slavery in 1851. The general impression as to the universality of French history is so strong, that I could quote fifty instances from serious writers to the effect that parliamentary government has been tried once for all, and definitively found to be not only bad, but impossible. This strange temper of mind, which takes no account of the general experience of the world, and ignores the doings of contemporaries, is quite sufficient to explain the contempt with which the French regard all other nations. They have nothing to learn from them. It is only by accident that they admit their existence; and they are always disposed to treat them as inferior beings.

One of the remarkable parts of the French character is a spirit of mockery, and it will easily be imagined from what I have said that they are dis-

posed to ridicule foreigners, even when they have no cause of ill-will against them. Moralists have endeavoured to analyse this mocking spirit, without reference to any particular application. It appears agreed that it is not only an assumption of superiority, but in reality produces the effect of superiority on others. Men almost always cower before those who ridicule them, because they feel that it requires some courage and faith in one's self to use this weapon. This may explain why so many heavier nations are disposed to admit implicitly the superiority of the French. But mockery is, after all, a woman's rapier. It is the arm of the feeble against the strong, of the little against the great, and is particularly used by children, by humpbacks, by the lame, by the blind, and by all kinds of cripples, who are protected by their infirmities. Men of large stature and robust bodies are seldom satirical. It may also be remarked, that savages and peasants are remarkably contemptuous. M. Bonstetten, happening to be lodging at Martigny in the Valais, observed some people assembled before the inn laughing and talking gaily, or rather communicating their sentiments by cries and gestures. These were members of what are called the Cretin race. The whole subject of their conversation was ridicule of those that were not Cretins. Abdallah of the Sea, on reaching the kingdom of fishes, was put into a cage and

carried to the court to be shown to the king, because he had no tail, and naturally excited boisterous merriment.

When French philosophical writers speak of their own countrymen, they invariably complain of the prevalence of the mocking spirit; and one of them adds severely, that mockers are not only defective in physical but in mental developement. It cannot be denied, therefore, that these remarks are applicable. There is nothing so difficult to reform as one's character; but it is not impossible. The defect which I notice arises principally from ignorance. The French are capable of great acquirements. Let them enlarge their acquaintance with men and things. What appears ridiculous when not understood, becomes admirable on better acquaintance. There could not be a more favourable opportunity afforded to a nation for self-examination and improvement. France has now less reason than ever to boast of its superiority. It has been obliged to admit its want of the most vulgar talent that man possesses, that which enables him to take care of his own affairs. In these days, when the science of government has been brought almost to perfection, the French have been obliged deliberately to resort to the barbarous Asiatic system of the rule of one man. They should turn to profit their period of humiliation.

The French, being fond of exaggeration, have written and said most bitter things of themselves. Their wit, Chamfort, used to exclaim at the Jacobin Club: "Let us take care. We are only Frenchmen, and we want to be Romans. The character of the French is compounded of the qualities of the monkey and the setter-dog. Droll and frisking like the monkey, he is malicious like it; caressing and licking his master like the setter, when beaten and chained, he bounds with joy when let loose for the chase." M. de Tocqueville has slily maintained in his book on America, that the French have so great an affinity with the savage, that when brought in contact with wild tribes they degenerate towards them instead of elevating them. These judgments are rather satirical than solid, though they touch on real defects. The French have many of the virtues of a great nation. What they chiefly want is faith in themselves and in others, longanimity to wait for the slow results of events, industry to study except for show, and that respect for some of the domestic virtues, without which legislation has no basis and life no haven.

CHAPTER VII.

Arrival in France—June 1848—The Constitution—Cavaignac—The Presidency—The *Coup d'Etat*—Why it took place—Travelling Englishmen—The French Upper Classes—Outside of French Manners—A *Soirée*—Rules thereof—Female Costume—Influence of the Empire—Napoleon III. at Compiègne—Symbolic Hats—The *Noblesse*—How to disperse *Emeutes*—Gentlemen of the Old School—Conversation—Piety—Brilliant Talk—A Wit Analysed—Great Men of Society—A Fable—Fashionable Circles—Debility of the Old Governing Classes—The Cholera—A Countess—Definition of Society—Mission of Democracy—Terror of the Upper Classes—A Frightened Lady—Ignorance and Prejudices—Divine Institution of Rank—A New Aristocracy—Exaggeration of Political Economy—A Banker and his Wife—The Poor and the Rich.

WHEN I made up my mind to return from the East and live in Paris, it was, as I have already hinted, without any intention of writing these volumes. The determining reason was curiosity to see how the experiment of a Republic would succeed in Europe—a curiosity connected with legitimate hopes as to the fortunes of modern civilisation. Unhappily, events advanced with a rapidity I had not foreseen. On reaching Marseilles, I found it in the midst of the struggle between displaced labour—

blinded by ignorance and passion and provoked by cold politicians, who had cringed to it three months before—and the organised powers of society. Whilst in quarantine we constantly heard the sounds of civil strife in the town or on the hills around. On the way northward, reports of insurrection preceded our arrival at every town. Paris was in a state of siege; its windows were broken, its house-fronts lacerated by bullets. The population at large was sad and downcast, as if a great national crime had been committed. The Faubourg St. Germain danced.

Then came the discussion of the Constitution. Pedantic reformers brought forward and voted systems which everybody but themselves knew to be inapplicable. Shutting their eyes to the peculiar circumstances of France, they annulled all their democratic institutions by creating a monarchical power, invested with the privilege of making war and peace, of disposing of the army, of choosing ministers, whilst a Pretender was preparing to come forward with all the ignorance and all the bad passions of the country—a mighty host—at his back. A virtuous politician—dripping with the blood of June—a Washington hid by circumstances behind the mask of Sylla—capable of doing what was right even with that terrible responsibility, which he had not sought,

upon him—in vain endeavoured to hide the past behind the present, and to save France from falling prostrate before what was then supposed to be a mere name. The name carried the day; yet those who still loved freedom in spite of its errors, continued to hope against hope. For three years France lived from hand to mouth, wavering between the fear of usurpation or revolt. I was absent again for a short time, but attentively followed the development of events. Although I had begun to understand the deplorable incapacity of the French nation for politics—which showed itself under a thousand forms of violence and weakness; although I felt that the Republicans, in all their schools and sects, were admirably furnished with weapons of destruction, yet quite unprepared with business-like schemes; although I knew that the monarchical parties, partly from want of theories adapted to the times, partly from timidity and corruption, partly from their puerile defeats when they had power in their hands, were more capable of conspiring for others than themselves; although it was quite evident that oaths were no longer sacred, and that a vast number of people considered that any form of slavery brilliantly imposed was better than uncertainty and danger; although, in November 1851, I saw that there no longer remained a living institution in France—nothing but coteries

of conspirators, kept from action by fear of a power that was itself conspiring with every element of success at hand;—yet I admit that I was not prepared for what followed. I believed in the coming *coup d'état;* but I did not believe in its triumph, because I was not aware of the extent to which France was demoralised by fear and fatigue.

When the great event, long waited for, happened, of course I shared the indignation of every man in whom the idea of right was not quite extinct; and it was some time before I could divert my mind from one object—before I could get rid of the sentiment of horror which the bloody scenes enacted around me excited; forget the roar of cannon, the cries of anguish; and, what was still more terrible and heart-rending, the sight of a whole population, that boasted to be the flower of the earth, the vanguard of civilisation, slinking to its homes, pale, cowed, repentant of its best deeds, and trying to excuse its humiliation by sneering with lips still white with terror at everything that is great and good—at liberty, at honour, at truth, at science, at literature, at ideas, at all it had previously adored, save the production of beef and bread. The impressions left by such periods are not easily effaced. But time works wonders. I at length was enabled to collect my reminiscences of other epochs, and to compare them with what passed before my eyes.

Every day, too, the tendency to satirise and vituperate diminished. I am now obliged to admit—whilst refusing to absolve crimes or forgive corruption—that the Empire succeeded to the Republic because the French nation mistook its aspirations towards liberty for liberty itself; and that Napoleon III. reigns by exactly the same right as other monarchs—by the tacit consent of a people adapted to his rule. Personal attacks upon him would now be childish. If he were an Antonine, he would not be where he is; and if the French people feel within themselves once more the sentiment of dignity and the love of freedom, he will be there no longer. At present he can only give way to some degrading Restoration.

I could scarcely say less than this, believing as I do that to live under despotism is the greatest misfortune and shame that can befall a nation which has once been free. However, we must exaggerate nothing. The French, though obnoxious to severe judgment, are neither totally nor incurably corrupt; and if I had space to enter into historical speculations, I could accumulate thousands of extenuating circumstances. Many good men have been open to moral blame in the course of their lives, and many great nations have passed through periods of humiliation. In my studies of French character, though I have noticed numerous defects that may almost be called radical, various facts have presented themselves that

promise well for the future. The great reason of the misfortunes of the country is want of education, using that word in the widest sense.

Most Englishmen who travel—at least those who influence public opinion at home—get their notions of what is going on in France from what they observe in the exclusive classes of society. They come over with letters of introduction to the Faubourg St. Germain, where they find the descendants of the old *noblesse* mixed with a certain proportion of the intelligence of the country. It is very difficult, however, to acquire a proper idea of living, thinking, acting, fighting, intriguing, money-making France in such circles, which in part represent the past, in part exhibit what may be called the official refinement of society. Some valuable notions, it is true, may be got even there. I was especially attentive to seek the reason why, in these latter times, not only the old families, but all the upper classes, the aristocracy of the cash-box as well as the aristocracy of blood, had entirely lost their hold on the country of which they seem to be the natural leaders, been deprived of all political influence, and set apart as it were in a sort of tolerated existence. Opportunities such as they have possessed are not rendered null except by great corruption or great incapacity; and I think most persons will agree with me, that if civilised France had done its duty, uncivilised

France would never have transferred its allegiance to a stranger. M. le Duc de Broglie has well said,—"Napoleon reigns, because the lower classes will it and the upper classes deserve it."

Nothing can be more brilliant and fascinating than the outside of French manners and the forms of French society. A stranger, who divests himself of vulgar national prejudices, cannot fail to be struck with admiration. The first impression, indeed, is that of high culture and great intellectual superiority. Escaping from hôtel life, or from the serious atmosphere of the study, we enter with delight into circles where rules, brought to the highest perfection, and enforced by good taste and a general sense of propriety, keep everybody in his right place, and yet produce an appearance of perfect liberty and ease. Nothing of the kind can surpass a Parisian *soirée*. An hour or two after dinner, people begin to collect, or rather to drop in. The valet announces them at the door of the salon, and then all ceremony apparently ends. The new-comers go up and salute the mistress of the house, perhaps chat a moment or two with her, and then form or join groups here and there. If any topic be stirred that interests them, they remain an hour or so, and then depart without saluting either the host or hostess, unless they happen to be near the door. A formal "good-night" might suggest to others the ne-

cessity of retiring. Sometimes a visitor remains only a few minutes. Very often there is an entire change of persons once or twice in the course of the evening. The conversation is seldom loud, and there is more pleasantry or chat than discussion.

Ladies, instead of arranging themselves in a line, which it requires more than mortal courage to approach, take their places at various parts of the room, and are soon surrounded by acquaintances. On entering they make a salutation, half-bow, half-curtsey, to the mistress of the house, and always say adieu to her. If she be young, she rises to receive them, or perhaps waits for new-comers near the door. When they go she accompanies them, sometimes even as far as the ante-chamber, where they put on their bonnets and shawls.

It is curious to notice, by the way, the remarkable change in fashions and taste that has taken place since the establishment of the Empire. I am not very learned on this point, but have observed that nearly all the exquisite simplicity which was the great characteristic of female dress in France has already disappeared. Gorgeous ornaments and vivid colours are the order of the day. I was once surprised to see a lady, always noted for the elegance of her costume, appear early in the evening at Madame ——'s *soirée* in a toilette very much resembling that of a savage queen. Her gown was of

bright red; her bracelets and necklace of coral beads larger than hazel-nuts; and her head was decorated with pieces of coral and feathers. Had she been less beautiful, she would have appeared ridiculous. The ladies say that they are compelled to this sacrifice of taste by the adoption of brilliant uniforms, laden with gold and silver embroidery, by the courtiers and all public functionaries. If they adhered to their old simplicity, they would be crushed, put out of sight completely. They have no desire to imitate birds, and concede the brightest plumage to the lordly sex.

The change which I have noticed is curious, because French women have long struggled successfully against the national taste, which is all for show and gorgeousness; as is evinced, says one of their writers, by the immense popularity of the dahlia-flower. The Empire has not yet had much influence on male costume, except by the re-introduction of frock-coats with long skirts; but it was once seriously contemplated to make an entire revolution in this respect, to suppress moustaches, and enforce tight breeches and a sort of top-boots. The Emperor, however, did not think it would be expedient, on reconsideration, to make Paris picturesque in this fashion; and contents himself with setting a good example at Compiègne, where, with a true appreciation of elegance, he reverts sometimes to the

costume of the last century, and shames his court into magnificence by wearing fine frills and pendant wristbands of Malines lace. I am glad to see my opinions about the great influence of a coat on the man who wears it confirmed by so sagacious a moralist. The Turk who dresses like a European loses half his bigotry and courage; and he who decks himself out in the costume of a degraded period is already sufficiently corrupt to be treated as a slave. If his Majesty, therefore, succeed in inducing his people to emulate the popinjays of the old courts in appearance, the Tuileries will at length be visited by a little tranquillity; there will be a second thread to support the sword of Damocles. The only official notice that has yet been taken of the family arrangement called the Fusion—by which a number of insignificant young men fancy they will modify the destinies of France—is an announcement that, on the grand reception of New Years' Day, the ladies are to wear trains, according to the fashion of the old court! This announcement was published in the "Moniteur" on the second of December—day of disgraceful memory! It is worth while to remark that, on the same occasion, the last and most humiliating insult was offered to France by the Government organs, which gravely announced that there were *not* to be rejoicings to celebrate the anniversary of the *coup d'état!* The glare of all

the fireworks in creation could scarcely give a deeper glow to the cheeks of an honest Frenchman than this gracious condescension.

I must not, however, so soon slip away from my *soirée*. It is the custom, even in the smallest, for every man to carry "his hat all in his hand" — a most uncomfortable practice, it is true, but founded partly on economy, partly on the desire to avoid appearing to have come with the dead determination to remain a long time. I know a man who maintains that the distinctive sign of a gentleman is, never to abandon his hat under any but the most pressing circumstances. He must never set it down on a chair or in a corner, unless he be required to dance; and then he must put it upon the chair his partner has vacated, and reseize it when he hands her back. In taking tea, the hat must never be set down. I was once at a dinner-party, and obstinately kept hold of my weapon of gentility until the soup was on the table. My friend gave me an approving glance, and afterwards said that I had all the instincts of a gentleman.

In elegant society there is always a sprinkling of old aristocratic names, a count or baron or two, and many redundant particles. I have observed the manners of this class with interest, because it seems probable that the next generation will only know of them by hearsay. Their forms of

intercourse are full of amenity, too little characterised, perhaps, to be called graceful. They even affect almost clerical humility, especially in dealing with the upstarts of Fortune—the new-comers, who do not yet know how to hold their hats, and seem always ready to put them on their heads and go away. It is difficult sometimes to tell the Aristocrat from the Jesuit in disguise. No doubt this arises in part from their education and their habitual intercourse with polished ecclesiastics, generally superior in knowledge and intellect; but it is evidence also of some discouragement, and not a little desire of conciliation. A French noble of the best school reminds me of an actor who remembers but cannot emulate his triumphs of fifty years ago, and feels that he is dependent at once on your kindness and your memory.

By the side of this gentleness of manner and spirit, however, there exists in many an infatuated belief in their superiority, which sometimes exhibits itself in denunciations and prophecies of evil, sometimes in unaccountable hopes for the future. The way in which they talk of passing events is most surprising to a stranger. I remember hearing a middle-aged marquis declare, in mincing accents, that revolutions succeeded because they were dealt with in too serious a manner. If his advice were taken, the upper classes would go into the streets

with whips, and disperse the brawling crowds. At first I could scarcely believe my ears; but when this strange speech received its proper development, I understood that M. de —— was thinking of the period when the *Muscadins* and the *Gardes du Corps* did really good service to the cause of royalty, if not with whips, at any rate with cudgels. He depended a great deal on a blow struck by a *gentilhomme*. The "rascal rabble" would cower before it, though steel and gunpowder failed. He forgot, however, that even French valets, when their masters, from natural insolence or the effect of tradition, presume to use their hands, generally turn round, and show that Nature has not given them fists in vain. He forgot, too, that this system had been tried, without the assistance of any prestige of rank, by the Bonapartists, under the Presidency; and that in their case, as in the cases of which he was thinking, those who wielded "tough crabstick" were courageous and successful only because they had cannons and bayonets behind. I looked at him with compassionate veneration, and more completely appreciated than I had ever done the causes of the revolution, and the absolute impossibility of re-edifying a Government that should have such men for supporters.

Now and then, in society, it is still possible to meet with old gentlemen who preserve something of

the courtly manners and pleasant, sparkling chat, of which we read in memoirs of past times. The champagne, however, has grown rather flat in bottle. They say themselves that the doctrines of equality have ruined their wit; which, according to them, was stimulated and exercised by the old forms of etiquette. People who all consider themselves on the same level have a coarse, straightforward way of speaking, destitute of allusions, destitute of verbal disguises, in which the great charm of the old style of talk consisted. However, we must not admit too easily that the world has lost anything very excellent by this change in the forms of conversation. From the scraps that may still be heard, and, above all, from the accounts given by those who regret old times, I am disposed to think the contrary. We now use language to interchange ideas: the wits of the old régime sought merely to compress small criticisms on external things, and the artificial parts of manners into phrases rather playful than pointed. It was only by accident that they touched on the great themes of life, it being considered peculiarly ungenteel to be in earnest. When serious matters were discussed, the tendency was always to divest them of their importance, and lower the pretensions of those who were *mal-adroit* enough to introduce them. All the great interests of humanity —all great ideas, and especially great virtues, were

mercilessly pulled down, depreciated, stripped of their ornamental accessories, by the administration of infinitesimal doses of incredulity. Enthusiasm was considered ridiculous, and faith a sign of weakness.

This incredulous society received a great check, and suffered by fire and sword. In the anguish of the persecution it had provoked, it to a certain extent changed its character, and took refuge in devotion. Many real instances of piety, which does not exclude violence and bigotry in defence of an order, have occurred in the ranks of the nobles who returned from abroad, came forth from their hiding-places, or threw off their imperial disguise. Indeed, the whole class, with few exceptions, has acquired an almost gloomily-religious spirit. It believes in weeping images, and other poetical miracles. Its character has been weakened, but purified of many stains. There are, of course, numerous cases of corruption; but, on the whole, setting aside their strange virulence against low-born people who presume to meddle in government matters, their affected aspirations for massacre, which I do not think they would carry out, and forgetting also some other points, they are, on the whole, in their private capacity, rather an estimable body of men than otherwise. It may easily be conceived, however, that their conversation has lost much of its

brilliancy. Their wit was fed by the vices and the intelligence they have lost.

But, even now, the language of the salons is a thing apart; and, as I have observed, the first impression produced on those who hear it is, that great felicity of expression is allied to sharpness of thought. I have often taken down the heads of conversations, and shall transcribe one which a lady whispered in my ear was extremely witty, or *spirituel.* It appeared to me also very brilliant at the time, because of the vivacity with which it was carried on, but was reduced to nothing on paper. The topics were: "Some ladies improve, like wine, by time: they, in fact, never grow old. It must not be even said that they are ugly; but if they are, so much the better. Beauty flies, but ugliness remains." On this theme, all sorts of amusing remarks were made; but I could not help being reminded of the laboured conflicts of wit, by which the jesters in our old comedies fill up the intervals of action. Of course, to any one who did not examine what was said, in my cold-blooded way the whole dialogue, carried on in choice language, without confusion or hesitation, each speaking in turn, as if repeating a part, and all allowing one person to guide and direct, as it were, the manœuvre, must have seemed a remarkable exercitation. I remember one trait that was rather

applauded. It was mentioned that a certain St. Simonian had preached on the emancipation of women at Cairo, in Egypt. "That is to say, in the desert," quoth some one.

It is not uncommon to meet in society an elegant little old gentleman, who has gained a reputation in his small circle for wit and learning on the strength of a few axioms, a few smart sayings, and a few celebrated friends. He descends from the ancient aristocracy, but has taken tints from the First Empire. I like to analyse him. In every circumstance of life, at all the turns and corners of conversation, he has a pretty phrase, an anecdote, a quotation, pat to the purpose; and he has been so accustomed to speak with applause, that every arrowy sentence is feathered and gilded, as it were, by a witty smile and a jocular twinkle of the eye. What he says is not humorous, and therefore he does not laugh; but he sometimes emits an elegant chuckle, that never fails to produce the effect. I have heard him speak on politics. He had a peculiarly sarcastic way of taking his pinch of snuff as he pronounced Albion to be perfidious, and explained how it emancipated its slaves for the pleasure of ruining its neighbours. His philosophy is that of the eighteenth century, and his morality that of courts in all ages. When he blasphemes, it is always in a judicious way. He disapproves of

fanaticism, even in infidelity. Now and then he informs young people from the country that he has discovered an irrefutable argument against the immortality of the soul. He knows a Jew, who has told him that the Pentateuch, like the Iliad, is a collection of rhapsodies hastily put together; from which it is evident that there is no such thing as a future state of existence. Moses furnishes him with an inexhaustible supply of jokes; and he shows his courage by unsparing witticisms about a Person, an offence against whom, we are warned, cannot be forgiven.

This pleasant old gentleman sometimes makes little quatrains, of course sparkling with verbal wit, on people who invite him to dinner, and repeats them just at the nick of time as improvisations—which they may be in France, where the word improvisation is applied not only to eloquent written speeches, but to elaborate books. It is astonishing with how little wit the world is amused. I once had an opportunity of noticing in what way a reputation for cleverness may be gained if you fall in exactly with the prejudices of your auditory, especially if those prejudices are mean, and refer to their personal position. The feeling of surprise that something can be said for them intensifies the applause. An old gentleman of the class I am describing had long been in the habit of writing little fables to read

in salons. He composed a work of this kind, and went out into the world to give currency to it. A chair was set in the middle of the room. Ladies and gentlemen sat or stood around. The author put on his gold spectacles, and produced a little bit of paper four inches square. I forget the words; but the idea developed was, that in a forest there were oaks and brushwood: from which it followed that aristocracy was a good thing. There was also an insult to M. Louis Blanc, who had just gone into exile. I was perfectly ashamed to hear the frenzied applause which this trash excited amongst people, every one of whom, in another mood of mind, would have nevertheless declared it to be a damnable sin to deny that all men were descended from a single family—all brothers, with immortal souls of equal value.

This topic of fashionable society, however, is too wide to be handled at present; and, indeed, to describe the manners and opinions of the salons, taking this word in the widest sense, would be to describe what may be called the ultimate forms of French thought, the sublimated result of modern civilisation. To do this, however, it is necessary not merely to be present in person, but to have gone through in study all the gradations by which each individual or each type has come to form part of those circles, to know how their minds have been built up, what are their ways of life,

what are the meanings of allusions, what the conventional values of words. In the course of these volumes I shall endeavour, without any hope of exhausting the subject, to transfer to my readers some of the results of my observations.

I wish, if possible, to guard them against the danger to which they must necessarily be exposed in the fascinating society to which their letters will introduce them. They are sure to be told that the cause of France's calamity is the ignorance, the wickedness, the avarice of the lower classes—in other words, Democracy and Socialism; and the more sagacious will listen with eagerness, and add one to the stock of their arguments—against increase of the suffrage for example. It is not good, however, to hear people plead their own cause in gilded salons, brilliantly lighted, with the smiles and glances of beautiful women, ready to confirm what is said, because consent is forced, and there is no place for reason. The real explanation of what has happened was the irremediable debility of the heirs of the old noblesse; the corruption, and venality, and want of political capacity, of the upper *bourgeoisie;* and the general laxity of private and public morality in the middle classes. They were unfit to govern, and have been set aside; but the people at large were also unfit from ignorance, and of course fell under a despotism. This, eliminating all confusing details, is the plain

statement of what has taken place in France; and I think I shall be able to prove what I advance by cursory glances at the formation of the French mind, at the particularities of French character and manners, and at the theories in vogue in the most important positions in life.

During the cholera of 1849, I made a morning call upon a lady who dwelt in a magnificent hôtel in the Faubourg St. Germain. There were several ladies and gentlemen present, gently sitting in comfortable arm-chairs; and the conversation naturally turned to the subject of the disease, which was striking with increasing force upon the proud and the humble. People spoke with low, measured voices, as they generally do in pestilence time, when the idea of moderation in all things has been suggested. Whilst we were talking a well-gloved domestic stealthily opened the door, and, gliding on one side, announced *Madame la Comtesse de* ——. In hobbled a little old lady, with a face that seemed to be marked with the footsteps of every bad passion—with small bleared eyes, vulture nose marvellously wrinkled, and a shapeless mouth wandering across the lower part of her face. An ignoble expression of terror disturbed her already hideous features. We looked at her in dismay, as if she had been the Genius of Cholera itself. "*Mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed, after inhaling some preservative from a good-sized bottle; "this is very dread-

ful! The pestilence is making progress. [Somebody here took up his hat and went away, as if to see into the truth of this statement.] When the people only were attacked, it *was all very well. On conçevait çela.* They were punished for their sins—for their ingratitude. But the matter is now becoming more serious. The disease is beginning to invade the ranks of *Society.* Monsieur le Marquis —— was carried off this morning: he made a beautiful death. M. l'Abbé —— paid him the last offices," &c. &c.

There were many things to notice in this speech, which is a very accurate representation of the tone commonly adopted in certain circles; but what principally struck me was the curious distinction drawn between the "people" and "society." I had been accustomed to use the latter word as synonymous with the whole associated body of human beings living in a particular country, or in the world at large; and to me, therefore, the cry raised at the Revolution of February, and too often repeated since, even in England, that "Society was in danger," seemed at once comical and malicious. I was now led to observe in what a variety of different senses the same word is used by different classes. Politicians seem to understand by Society a certain moral entity, totally irrespective of the individuals that compose it—something like Mr. Gladstone's State—

and amuse themselves by altering its form in their own minds, and making experiments on its conditions of existence. The public, less inclined to generalise, agrees with me in looking upon Society as the whole mass of the people living in certain relations one with the other; and when they hear of its being attacked, imagine that personal injury is threatened to its members!

Those, however, who have created the alarm, think, with Madame de ——, that Society means the fashionable circles, where birth and position exempt from the duty of work; and, being little versed in political economy, imagine that, if the theories of Democracy were really applied, opulent idleness would disappear. Although, therefore, we cannot but be disgusted by the state of mind evinced in the remarks I have above quoted, and must necessarily scourge the furious ignorance of the upper classes in France, which led to the cry of "Society in danger," and brought forth all the calumnies under which liberal parties of every degree are now overwhelmed; yet, to be fair, we must admit that no calm speculator has as yet explained with clearness that Democracy does not promise or threaten to eradicate any vice from human nature; that its mission is simply to destroy the artificial impediments to our development; and that, among other things, it cannot meddle even with the inordinate accumulation of wealth and the indul-

gence in luxury, provided it be distinctly proved that no institution is accomplice in producing this disease. Christianity has already said everything that can be said against riches; and any regulation to the effect that there shall be no rich men, would be as absurd as to decree that there shall be no bad men.

When I first began to study the aspects of society in France, after the Revolution of February, nothing struck me more than the constant state of uneasiness and alarm in which lived the upper, the elegant classes. One of its manifestations was the wonderful facility which they displayed in inventing theories of spoliation and outrage against themselves. There is nothing so ingenious as fear; it is even more ingenious than hatred, especially when its concern is with the preservation of money. It then assumes the proportions of madness, and prepares for the commission of crime.

I remember going to see the opening of the Legislative Assembly in 1849. A considerable crowd had collected without arms, and, to all appearance, quite peaceable in intention. Their object was to make a demonstration in favour of the vast number of political prisoners who had been condemned without the forms of law, under the state of siege, in consequence of the rising in June; which every one then knew to have been in part instigated by the Bonapartist, and provoked by the Royalist factions.

Their cry was, "Amnesty!" Every now and then large bodies of dragoons charged down the streets to keep them clear, and were received with cheers. There was certainly a chance that some accident might produce a collision, and a little excitement was natural. At the thick of the affair I saw a lady, who had somehow gone astray and fallen into that turbulent scene, creep, in a stooping attitude, along the wall. It is impossible to describe the anguish and terror of her countenance, which was distorted into pallid ugliness. Every one at once saw that she belonged to the class which considers the people as ogres thirsting for aristocratic blood; and though, strictly speaking, the poor woman was an object of pity, the contrast of her fear with the cheerful, though excited, faces around, was irresistible, and a tremendous laugh sent her scurrying along with increased circumstances of drollery. She was seen running until she turned the corner of the Rue de Poitiers.

On reflection, it was evident to me—and hundreds of corroborations were afterwards added—that this good lady need not have been actuated by that stupid detestation of ill-dressed, dirty, working people, which has been too common since the era of revolutions began. Her fault was, most probably, ignorance; the recollection of '93 may have been present to her mind; and the enthusiastic mildness

of the new Republic, which was rather operatic than business-like, had not cured her. Early impressions in slightly-educated classes are ineffaceable. The old saying, that the French nobility, on their return from abroad, had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, remains still, to a certain extent, true. It is difficult to persuade persons brought up in the liberal and middle-class ideas of our age and country, that there ever existed beings who believed in a natural difference between the members of the upper and the lower orders; that is to say, in the divine institution of rank. This heresy, however, has not even now been dispelled by the spread of enlightenment. The ancient barriers still exist in the minds of many, who keep their faith in some degree to themselves, waiting for better times. I am afraid that this remark applies, to some extent, even in England; for a lady once told me, with tears of admiration in her eyes, an instance of "beautiful subordination," which consisted in a peasant refusing to enter the Lord's house at the same time with a nobleman, because "they had been made of different orders." However, with us these fancies are harmless now. In France, they are not quite so; for although the nobility have little chance of ever returning to their old position, yet the existence of their claims contributes, in a great measure, to keep up a feeling of hostility in the other classes, both to them and to

the Church—confounded with Christianity—that supports them.

There is another point of view, also, on which it is necessary to insist. The aristocratic feeling has been adopted, as it were, by the large and powerful class whose presence in the quarter of the Chaussée d'Antin throws the Faubourg St. Germain almost entirely into the shade. The old Empire—even the Restoration—but, above all, the reign of Louis Philippe, gave opportunities for the development of what is called the High Bourgeoisie, consisting of all the members of the middle classes who have made great fortunes and acquired leading positions in industry or finance. They are the real aristocracy of France at the present moment, and it is against their influence that the principal attacks of the Republican and Socialist parties have been directed. It must be admitted that their wealth has often been illegitimately acquired. The true reason of the hatred against them, however, is the strange eagerness they have always exhibited to push one portion of the doctrines of political economy to their utmost extreme, not so much in practice as in theory. We can scarcely conceive in England the delight which men in exalted stations, necessarily the objects of envy, have taken in publicly, without any necessity, putting forward the harshest maxims which the purse has invented for its own protection: as, for example, that "No

one has a right to assistance from the state,"—"He who cannot find work must die,"—"Charity encourages idleness," &c. &c. These ideas are, of course, strict deductions of Science; but the French financial aristocracy forgot that there were other deductions, equally strict, by which they must be controlled. The absurdity of their antagonists was in supposing that they maintained those opinions from mere wickedness, whereas the real cause was that they were young in political economy, and thought it very effective to advance its most startling axioms. Besides, like all newly-enriched men, they were prone to make a god of their wealth, and insisted on exercising all the privileges of property in order to be quite certain of their position.

Two very old people, a banker and his wife, were lolling in splendid arm-chairs in a palatial residence, and began to talk about the envy that devours the lower classes—envy of the rich, to wit. Nothing, they observed, can be more deplorable than the feeling of envy. To them it was quite incomprehensible. They were satisfied with the position in which Providence had placed them. They coveted nobody's good fortune; did not feel a spark of that infernal passion; looked, on the contrary, without envy on the liberty and want of thought of the poor; were perfectly content to accept their wealth with all its cares; and so on. All this was said in absolute good

faith, unsoftened by a single phrase of compassion; and it was easy to understand how a class composed of such people might assist in provoking a revolution.

However, this is political. It is impossible to speak of the aspects of French manners at the present time without trenching, to a certain extent, on such grounds. Yet I confess that I am glad to escape, for the present, into other regions; and having premised that my object is to explain, in part, one of the most remarkable and puzzling events in history, I shall not think it necessary always to point out the exact bearing my statements have on present circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII.

Classes of a People—The Students—Intellectual Gipseydom—The University under the Empire—Anecdote of Napoleon's Nose—Political Influence of Students—How they become Respectable—Aspirations for Luxury—The First Year—A Fair Companion—Young Bachelors—My Chest of Drawers—Alexis—Landlords and Rent—Running away—Philosophy of Non-payment — French Novels — Real Life—Influence of early Vagabondage—My Experiences.

It is common to speak of the Parisian population as one homogeneous mass, and I have seen attempts to characterise them in a single phrase. There are, of course, some points peculiar to all or most of the inhabitants of every great city, some habits of mind, some modes of considering life and working out its details, some singularities of language, some virtues or vices of character. Members of the same family, of the same community, of the same regiment, learn particular ways of walking, speaking, and thinking; just as dog-fanciers acquire almost canine features after long practice in their art. In describing the people of a capital, however, it is necessary to take

them in classes, often to select individual types. At any rate it will be best for me to pursue this method, and, retracing the track of my experience, lead my readers into those scenes where my impressions have been gathered.

There is one class that has specially interested me, that of the students,—the young men who do not yet occupy any official position in society, but who are going through the apprenticeship of the world, whilst they are supposed simply to be storing their minds with knowledge. They stand in near relation with another class, which finds most of its recruits amongst them, and which romancers have designated as an Intellectual Gipseydom. It consists really of students, artists, and young geniuses, who, carried away by their imaginations, their passions, or their indolence, have degenerated almost into vagabonds; who imagine they are on the way to distinction; and who often, remaining from taste or habit in a position to which necessity or mere whim has brought them, end their days in a hospital, or drag on a miserable existence, studying ever, and never learning, until they become a burden to themselves and a pest to society. I do not include amongst them the men of real intellectual power, who afterwards burst into celebrity if they do not die at their post; for genius is a sad, melancholy thing, that habitually shuns boisterous society, and has little in common with those

jovial spirits that treat life as a comedy, and think themselves entitled to admiration because they bravely bear its discomforts and laugh at its responsibilities.

Yet such a state of existence is not without charm, and when merely an episode, cannot but bear good fruits. We learn therein the small value of the artificial duties, the tyrannical exigencies of society; how easy it is to live upon a crust of bread; the exhaustless resources of what we call chance, because we are ashamed to say Providence; the riches of hope; the delights of a single ray of sunshine. It is only when we wilfully remain in that wild condition, declining to exert ourselves to escape from it, that we begin to feel its demoralising effects. The class to which I allude is, perhaps, principally composed of individuals who have savoured the delights of vagabondage until they care not to claim a position in society.

Paris had always been a great resort of students. Since the establishment of the University, however, its attraction had gone on increasing till lately. Even under the Empire observers began to notice the evil results of the system, in some respects praiseworthy and in many unavoidable, of congregating all active and aspiring young men in the capital. The great complaint was that the students, being under no external control, and having not yet learned the

art of self-control, rarely attended with assiduity to their lessons. A writer, who studied the law at that time, says that out of fifteen hundred young men who nominally followed the lectures, scarcely fifty studied seriously. The others gave themselves up to pleasure, or sought amusement in miscellaneous reading. "What bond was there to keep us in?" he exclaims. "We were our own guides; we lodged where we chose; we spent the money of our parents as we pleased; and we worked just when we felt inclined. There was no control. The students generally contented themselves with going to the school to answer to the calling over of the muster-roll, after which they disappeared. Very often there was a kind of mutual-assurance system in favour of the absent. Comrades adroitly simulated various voices, and thus filled up the vacancies. The professors were only half-deceived, but shut their eyes. Sometimes students who had worked seriously presented themselves to pass examinations for comrades who had scarcely opened a law-book. They obtained certificates under false names, and handed them over to their friends. These frauds were considered as good jokes." It appears that the system last alluded to is still pursued; for I know a man who actually gained his living by appearing under various disguises, and with various names, to pass examinations. He was at length detected and put into

prison: but being protected, they say, by the Jesuits, was discharged on the plea that the law had not foreseen the delinquency, and that there was no punishment attached.

Under the Empire the students, who naturally abhorred the government of the sword, used to applaud the speech of Burrhus against Nero. This was considered a vigorous act of opposition. One day, a statue of Napoleon was installed with great solemnity in the midst of the amphitheatre of the Law School. M. Dupin, among others, in his doctor's robes, stood at the foot of the statue. Adulatory speeches were pronounced, but excited no applause. The students bitterly felt two things,—the stifling of the press, and the conscription. The sonorous phrases of the orators rolled over the heads of a silent crowd. Next day it was noticed that the statue of white marble had already an antiquated appearance. The fact was, that somebody had knocked off his imperial majesty's nose. Great consternation fell upon the professors; the event was magnified into a conspiracy; students were arrested by hundreds and taken to the Ministry of Police. There they were interrogated with frightful severity. In vain did they protest their innocence. A student cried out, "Bring in the informer, that I may confound him!" "Young man," said one of the examiners, "do you think you are before a

court of justice? Know that the police is above the law." No traitor, however, could be found; and the prisoners were discharged.

This anecdote, with what I have already said of the manners of the students of that time, paints their character at most periods. They have always been ill-regulated in life and troublesome to deal with; but from the circumstances of their position, their independence from family cares, the courage and generosity of their age, and the nature of their studies, they have always formed, as it were, the vanguard of public opinion, ready to risk their lives in opposition to arbitrary government, and sometimes to injure the liberal cause by untimely outbreaks. Whatever their faults, selfishness and compromise were not amongst them; and it cannot be denied that on most occasions their conduct, when called upon to act politically, has been heroic and praiseworthy.

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that because by instinct or conviction the students have often played a brilliant part in French history, their manners and character are not open to very severe criticism. They have some points of resemblance with German students, who are poetical, philosophical, and liberal, as long as they remain at the universities; but immediately on leaving coagulate into fat citizens or evaporate in dreams.

It has already been remarked with what facility the French youth, who have been the most ardent revolutionists, the pillars of secret societies, disciples of all extravagant doctrines, settle down into what they have been accustomed to describe contemptuously as "respectability." They feel, sometimes, the fury of the convert against those who are following in their footsteps; but their enthusiasm, like their education, is generally superficial, and is worn as a costume without exerting much influence on the mind. This is the reason why it so often hides itself under enormous bushes of hair, eccentric garments, and rough manners. Shave and wash many a student, and give him that amenity which interest so rapidly teaches, and you make of him the most inoffensive mortal possible. In other cases, a complete moral transformation is required; for the contrast of ordinary existence with that spent in alternations of pleasure and study is the greatest that man is capable of bearing. Those who are not prepared for this change by lassitude, the bitter teachings of poverty, or unsatisfied desires of luxury, give up the career which their parents have chalked out for them, and permanently join the ranks of that class, the ornaments of which are eccentric geniuses, the mass idlers, the rear-guard cosmopolites and criminals—men whom creditors and tax-gatherers never, but friends always find, uncounted by the

census, unclassified by statistics, true Ishmaelites of civilisation.

Most students, in Paris as elsewhere, begin with industry, and endeavour at once to master the weapons of the mind. But I think that in France they are more immediately than in other countries impelled by a desire of personal aggrandisement, and the hope of acquiring the means of luxury. Ambition is a characteristic of the French; but they are less ambitious of distinction for its own sake, than for the enjoyments it brings or imparts. Literature has divined the national taste, and caters to it by vivid descriptions of luxury and material enjoyment. The writers of the present day surpass themselves in descriptions of fine furniture, spacious hôtels, delicious gardens, splendid balls, and physical beauty; and thus stimulate the already excited imaginations of youth. As might be expected, however, these oriental pictures, instead of pricking them to exertion, relax their energies and disturb their dreams; and many a young student, who has panted over the magnificence of Fortunio, hastens to make a palace of a garret, and to persuade some bright-eyed grisette to give laws to an empire with a three-legged chair for a throne and a linnet and a kitten, that fatten in spite of starvation, for only subjects.

The students, though less exclusively than of yore, continue to inhabit in or about the Quartier

Latin, in the neighbourhood of the Public Schools. As a class, they are totally different in manners from anything we know of in England. Many rapidly degenerate into mere men about town, and spend their time in entertainments and public balls; others preserve a certain degree of refinement, study poetry instead of law and medicine, and become more learned in the female character than anything else; whilst others really work, and thus incur the contempt of their comrades. The first year is generally spent by the most prosy, without much deviation from routine. Afterwards there is a great change. The well-meaning student begins to be uneasy in his new mode of existence; he misses the little attentions which he has been accustomed to receive in his family or at college; the porter's wife is not always civil or obliging; he finds his shirts without buttons, all his wardrobe in disorder; so that, in mere self-defence, without any fanciful dreams, he is obliged to call to his assistance some good soul who will consent to brave the opinions of the stricter part of society for a semblance of happiness and a promise of comfort.

Before he becomes the head of an unauthorised family, the student's great desideratum is society. In search of this, he generally chooses some neighbouring coffee-house as his drawing-room, and easily falls into the habit of frequenting it every evening.

Here he makes acquaintances that often materially influence his future career. This is his first introduction to the wild kind of life, one of the qualifications for admission into which is the theoretical or practical adoption of certain ideas, which I shall endeavour to develope. For the present, therefore, I shall not consider the student as a studying animal, but as a young bachelor, with limited means and unlimited desires, and endeavour to show what colours his mind takes from his circumstances.

Once, when I had furniture of my own, a friend of mine, a young artist named Alexis, came to me evidently in a state of great perplexity. It was on the 7th of October, and I could give a shrewd guess as to what was the matter. However, I waited for him, as the French say. He pretended to be excessively merry, and smoked his pipe as he hummed the song of Béranger,—

"Dans un grenier qu'on est bien a vingt-ans;"

but by degrees he brought the conversation round to that accursed race, as he called them, the landlords. Students are looked upon by men of property with a suspicious eye; but, after all, they are known to have friends somewhere. Artists are without relations. No one ever hears of their fathers or mothers, brothers or uncles. There is, therefore, a perpetual enmity between them and the owner of a house; and, for that matter, the porter also. M. Joseph has often

told me, with a contemptuous emphasis I cannot represent, that artists and working tailors are not to be trusted. Alexis was in difficulties for the tenth time since I had known him. The facts were simply these. On the 14th of the month of August, precisely at a quarter to twelve, had been delivered to him in due form a written warning to quit the premises next quarter-day, under pretence that the rent of two previous quarters had not been paid. My hair began to stand on end, and my heart to harden. I also had my rent to pay. My face must have become very grave, for Alexis hastened to explain that partly by borrowing, partly by collecting monies due, he had been enabled to scrape together just sufficient to liberate himself. The present difficulty was this. He had found another lodging, into which he was to move next day; but the porter of the house had sent him a written notice that the first article of furniture he must take in must be a chest of drawers, in order that there might be something to answer for the rent. As he came to this point of his doleful narrative, his eyes glanced towards a handsome old-fashioned piece of furniture which I had recently bought, and I knew its fate at once. He had come to borrow my chest of drawers. There was not time to follow the example of a friend of his, who had knocked up a commode of pasteboard for such occasions, which he used to take into a lodging with great appearance of care,

and whenever he was on the point of moving carried away piecemeal under his arm.

"Where there is nothing, the king loses his rights. You can't comb a devil who has no hair." These are the phrases in which an unfortunate student of the wild genus I am describing, when pushed into a corner, expostulates with a creditor. Landlords endeavour not to be made victims of such proverbial philosophy. Unless very much in want of lodgers, they insist that enough furniture shall be brought in to answer for the rent of two quarters. The law is inexorable in their favour. It is impossible to remove property, except with the connivance of the porter, until the rent is paid; and it is the most important part of Cerberus's duty to see that you do not. If the slightest suspicion of poverty attach to you, your movements are watched with disagreeable perseverance: and though Anatole, living in an entresol, did manage to move through the windows, and Madame Pinson through a shop on the ground-floor of her house—paying I know not what dues in passing, yet it is rare that such attempts are successful. Patrols are particularly inquisitive about carts seen in motion late at night.

Although the law allows a landlord to retain furniture for rent, it cannot be sold for a year and a day. Lodgers may take away their bed and bedding; also their instruments of labour. Instances,

however, in which this privilege is arbitrarily denied occur. Petty infringements of law are always possible when possession and misery are at war. Alexis, who has been peculiarly unfortunate, had himself not long before been deprived even of his easels and his brushes, and was glad to get away in his best clothes. Such a loss was irreparable.

I scarcely know a single young French student who has not been more than once in serious difficulties when quarter-day arrived. Probably the same is more or less the case all the world over; but in France the situation is so common as to have given birth to a body of philosophy thereunto adapted. It is a received opinion among a large class of promising youths, who are fitting themselves for the highest offices of state, as well as for the liberal professions, that a demand for rent is an exaction which they are almost bound to evade if possible. Of course the necessities of life, and a certain instinct of probity, often make them run counter to their philosophy; but the most correct in practice are fond of bandying about dishonest jokes, and listen with delight to an account of a moving to "the sound of the wooden bell," as they express it. In England, a young gentleman would be ashamed to boast before half-a-dozen comrades that he had carried away the chief part of his furniture bit by bit, or shunted it all out of window on to the top of a cab,

—partly from unwillingness to admit that he was ever in such straits, but chiefly because he could not be sure that the story would be received with an approving laugh. In many classes of French society, such a confession exalts him who makes it almost into a hero; and the younger and less experienced applaud most uproariously, promising themselves to do likewise at the first opportunity. "Most men," say the Cynic Blount, "are dishonest, but few desire to appear so." Among these bright youths many do not care about seeming dishonest, if they are so with wit, and in a certain measure.

When a student receives a sum of money he often repeats the old joke, that, having determined to be economical and avoid all unnecessary expense, he shall decline to pay his debts. Too often the pleasantry is carried into practice; and when it is not so, these jovial fellows pretend that their only object in handing out money is to astonish their creditors. For landlords do not enjoy a monopoly in this respect. Tailors and other tradesmen innocent enough to give credit—(English fashionables will read this with astonishment and incredulity)—are put off to the last moment. This is made a matter of principle, at least in conversation; and the salve applied to the debtor's conscience is, that the villains always charge double the reasonable price—a plain reason for paying them nothing at all. It will be seen that I care-

fully distinguish principle from practice; for in this, as in every other case, the French are not half so bad as they pretend to be. However, it is certain that, either from necessity or choice, they put in practice their doctrines sufficiently often to have made them regarded with suspicion by landlords, porters, tradesmen, and other sordid beings, who require to be paid, and see no beauty in art and science sufficient to induce them to supply their merchandise gratuitously. We must take care, however, not to include in our judgment those few ardent workers who, sustained by hope and genius, conquer kingdoms of knowledge whilst they are unable to pay for a dinner, and who sometimes try to laugh off the bitter reflections of poverty, by scoffing at the rights and duties of this world, whilst secretly they subject themselves to sufferings approaching torture in the desperate struggle to meet their engagements. The students generally have fixed incomes, though small; and when they are in difficulties, it is because pleasure or improvidence has exhausted their money.

In the French novels that undertake to describe the manners of students in Paris, perhaps one-third is taken up with accounts of the stratagems by which landlords and other creditors are evaded; and any joke of the same family, however stale, made use of on the stage, is sure to be received with a shout of laughter. There is a wide-spread sympathy in the public with

non-payment. It must not be supposed, however, that I wish to draw too rigid an inference from the tone of contemporary literature. On the contrary, I hope to be able to show that it is impossible to acquire correct ideas of French manners from French novels and dramas, without personal experience, or the assistance that I am endeavouring to give. I merely point out, in order to guard against denial, that the unconscious admissions of native writers coincide with my own observations.

The difference between real life and the life of the stage or of romance is this, that in the latter, when a young man has spent some years in a society whose code, often infringed, is almost that of sharpers, he, as a rule, makes a marriage of pure love towards the end, and glows with all the virtue of an Aristides, not only paying his debts, but compensating whomsoever he may have wronged. This is not the natural course of things. The action of to-day is the germ of that of to-morrow; and he who has once accustomed his mind to disregard the rules of right in the early time of life, rarely relapses into honesty as he grows old.

These remarks, however, are too severe to be of general application in their fullest extent. Due deductions must be made; but it is perfectly correct to say, that the flower of the French youth,—those who are destined to become the depositaries of public

opinion, and to occupy the bench, the bar, the ministries, all the liberal professions, all offices private and public, as well as most of those whose duty it is to cultivate the national taste and inculcate notions of morality,—begin life in a medium in which the delicacy of their sentiments of honour and of probity is blunted, if not utterly destroyed. Somewhat similar observations, it appears, have already been made; for the author of one of the vividest pictures of a certain phase of student life has observed: "If the students were as perverted as they are represented to be, the destinies of France would be strangely compromised." Why, it was the sad spectacle of a nation struggling for perfection, and falling as it struggled into the mud, that induced me to demand an explanation from the facts of manners which I already knew! The great events of history prepared no one for what has happened. We can only account for the deplorable state of public morality in that unlucky country, by the admission that private morality has been neglected. How, indeed, is it possible, that among a people where every man of mark has passed a certain portion of his life in a state bordering on vagrancy, struggling with want created by extravagance, at war with creditors, obliged to resort to all the shifts of practised men about town, and experiencing, moreover, by anticipation, all the emotions and vicissitudes of married

life without undertaking any of its duties,—how is it possible that in this school should be formed citizens of even average virtue? There is danger, I know, of the retort that I am reasoning in a circle; for that the state of public morality influences the conditions of education: but, letting the cause alone, it cannot be denied that such youths can only grow into such men.

I have thought it necessary to say thus much of the prosy, matter-of-fact aspect of student life in Paris, before touching on its poetical features, because this is a point of view that is often neglected. If I wished merely to captivate my readers' attention, I should at once, discarding all these impertinent moral reflections, plunge into a description of that wild and fascinating mode of existence in which youth, despatched to the capital, by painstaking parents, in pursuit of knowledge, find time to bask in the sunshine of pleasure, to savour the sweets of idleness, and to revel in liberty for which they have not worked. Perhaps the moral ought to have been placed after the fable; but I was afraid that when once I had entered upon those scenes and incidents amidst which I wilfully mixed, in the vain hope that I could move through them an unscathed observer, the delights of reminiscence coming over me like the south wind in summer, charged with associations of other lands and other times, might melt me into too

great a leniency, and transmute a fair judgment into an apology. My pen hurries me forward, and will not stay to polish these sentences or fill up the deficiencies of these reflections. Even now, though my experiences are near, comparatively, in time, they belong, as it were, to another order of things; and I feel that no combination of circumstances can ever throw me, with the same sentiments, amidst similar scenes. Impressions of this kind dim for a time, when business or ambition occupies the mind; but I see that, at a more advanced period of life, they come back upon others as if they were actions of yesterday, but that then distance becomes a claim to indulgence, errors are recalled as amiable follies, and repentance acquires its bitterest tinge from regret that such things are no longer possible to be done.

CHAPTER IX.

Systematising—Boy Schools—Studies—Professors—Punishments—Precocious Collegians—Small Philosophers—A young Lovelace—Spoiled Children—Paul-Auguste—Parents and Children—Time of Schooling—Brothers and Sisters—Quiet Manners—Mode of Fighting—Diminished Pugnacity—Courage—Immorality—The University—Theory of Anarchy—Centralisation—A Promising Youth.

Some writers, when they introduce an episode which they think particularly useful, but which they are afraid will seem rather dull, politely give the reader, who is in search only of amusement, permission to skip. If there be any one amongst those whom I am addressing who has that vile habit, I cannot prevent him from following it; but I at least hope that the ladies who have, and those who may have, to do with children and families, will go steadily on, partly because it is good for them to know what takes place in foreign countries, partly because they will not otherwise be able perfectly to understand what follows. I promise to be now as brief as possible, and to be almost as amusing as a story-book afterwards.

There is no people so systematic as the French, a characteristic I am sometimes disposed to attribute to their want of power of self-guidance. Nothing, according to them, is well done that is not done by rule. They talk freely of inspiration, of vivid impulses; but take care never to trust to them. We must all remember the time when, in ardent pursuit of knowledge, we have portioned out our days and hours for particular studies; giving the morning to the classics, the afternoon to philosophy, Monday to history, Saturday to physics, and so on. Experience has taught us, that in this way we seem to go over a great deal of ground, and learn nothing after all. In most things, but especially their ideas of education, the French have not got beyond this period.

The education of boys in Paris is carried on partly in the Government Colleges, partly in Institutions and in Pensions, two different kinds of boarding-schools. Until recently, the programme of studies was nearly the same in all, for reasons which I shall mention. At present I wish merely to give a general idea of the nature of the instruction which boys are thought fit to receive, and of the way in which they are prepared to enter either on the ordinary duties of life or into the more arduous regions of study. The word "collegian," in French, is commonly used to describe a boy—or *jeune homme*, as they express it—say from ten upwards, who, having escaped from the

primary school, or from home tuition, is sent to receive his final polish before any especial career is chosen for him. I have had little experience of this kind of life, for, as far as France is concerned, my education was cut short soon after the first stage. From what I hear, there is no reason for regret. The French colleges, private and public, do not appear to be very successful in laying the foundations of knowledge. Without, for the present, appealing to the superficial acquaintance of the French with most things—for this might be corrected by subsequent study—it is sufficient to say, that the multiplicity of matters which are forced on the attention of raw boys affords ample grounds for condemnation. The pupils are taught chiefly in classes by special lecturers, who successively direct their attention to Greek and botany, Latin and chemistry, French, German, and English, ancient and modern history, natural history, mathematics and rhetoric, cosmography and philosophy, the exact sciences, and light literature. Most institutions also undertake to teach drawing, dancing, and fencing.

The French schools are generally organised on a more pretentious plan than the English. A great deal is sacrificed to form and appearance. In a school with fifty pupils there is, first, the master, then the prefect of studies, then the under-master, then the master of studies, vulgarly called the *pion*. The

last-mentioned, corresponding to our usher, overlooks the boys in the morning, when they prepare their lessons, and hears the elementary classes. He is almost always the object of hatred and the subject of practical jokes. Besides these permanent members of the establishment, a special professor for most departments of knowledge is engaged to come at fixed hours.

The system of teaching by means of lectures is inefficient, even with young men. Lectures are, in reality, only useful as stimulants. With boys—I beg pardon, with collegians; the French language contains no word for a boy—it is most absurd. For one whose attention is captivated, fifty are present in body but absent in spirit. An ingenuous young man, recently escaped from this bondage, has admitted to me, that the lessons at which he was present had left no trace whatever in his mind. The professor, or pedant, as he called him, seemed to be speaking for his own amusement, or for the instruction of a few willing pupils whose attention consoled him for the stupidity of the rest. To show a willingness to be taught is a kind of flattery—perhaps the most irresistible. We can scarcely, therefore, marvel, if the clever boys are exceedingly favoured. There can be no position more dreadful in the world than that of a man who should conscientiously endeavour simultaneously to lead fifty minds of different calibres,

fifty untamed boys, the majority of whom would be intractable even alone, into one avenue of thought. The consequence is, that most pupils go stolidly through their lectures for a certain number of years, and are sent back to their parents furnished with little more than the names of the various departments of study.

It is probably known to most persons that corporal punishments, though, as a keen writer has remarked, in accordance with nature, which teaches us most things by physical pain, are entirely dispensed with in the colleges. This extreme is, perhaps, better than the system that so long disgraced our public schools; but the effect has been bad. There are natures, and those not the worst, which are intractable at the outset. Corporal punishments were abolished at the Revolution, a revulsion of feeling being occasioned by the unsparing manner in which the brothers of the Christian Church, commonly called the Frères Ignorantins, used to wield the rod. Priests and their kin, probably on account of their contempt of the flesh, are generally advocates for whipping and other kinds of disrespectful treatment of the human form divine. Even the sisters who direct girls' schools are peculiarly severe in their punishments. In the lay colleges, where insubordination must be checked, very strange means are sometimes adopted. I have myself seen a boy compelled, in the midst of

summer, to kneel in a glaring court-yard for two hours looking up at the sun.

Children, like men, are the slaves of names, and it is not to be expected that French boys should remain uninfluenced by the absurd circumstances under which they are brought up. One of the greatest evils a country has to struggle against is precocity, which in France is encouraged rather than suppressed. This is, perhaps, the reason why the few pupils who distinguish themselves at college are never heard of afterwards in the world, and why celebrities are recruited from the disgraced forms. The former are worn out before they are men. It is not uncommon to hear a lad of fourteen talk as if he had a great mission to accomplish in this life. Parents, especially mothers, encourage this pernicious developement; which, indeed, is favoured by the whole system, from its nomenclature to the costume adopted.

Every collegian is dressed in a handsome uniform, consisting of an impudent-looking but elegantly-shaped cap, a military frock-coat, edged with red, confined by a varnished leather band, and trowsers with a red cord down the side. Long lines of schoolboys are often met with in the street, the hindmost mere children, the foremost tall, strapping fellows, who already begin to eye the grisettes as they pass.

The influence of costume is incalculable. Dress

a boy as a man, and he will at once change his own conception of himself. Formerly it was the fashion in France to rig out children as soldiers, and arm them with guns and swords. I remember seeing a mere babe in full National Guard's costume. This, however, is no longer the case; but, as a rule, all boys are dressed as much as possible like men. They are early taught, also, to ape manly manners, and succeed to the admiration of the ladies, who assist by the warmth of their praises in forcing the young plants into premature blossom. It has been remarked with wit and truth, that some of these small philosophers affect to class man among the mammalia, and to decide on the degree of his affinity with the bat. When they return to their father's house during the holidays, or at the end of their time, they have often already lost a part of the bloom of youth. "They decide magisterially on everything; have opinions in morals and politics; judge of what is good and what is bad; pronounce on the beauty of women, on the value of books, on the styles of actors; dance with careless indifference; boast of being already weary of the number of their *successes;* and, to give a final touch to this ridiculous and horrid picture, they sometimes commit suicide."

This is the exaggerated delineation of a rhetorician, but it may be partly justified from reality. Whilst I am writing this page I learn a story of female

frailty. The young girl is very unhappy: she has a prospect of being obliged to support two, when her labour even now scarcely enables her to support one; but her "friend" has promised to assist her, and "do what is honourable,"—as soon as he escapes from school and is established in an independent position as a student! If we could know the future career of this scarce-breeched Lovelace, it might afford curious instruction.

I have lately heard an anecdote of a mother to whom a schoolmaster—or professor—wrote, requesting her to withdraw her son from under his care, as it was absolutely impossible to teach him anything. She went about showing the letter, imagining that her darling boy had nothing more to learn. Let us respect the exaggeration of maternal affection without omitting to remark on its deplorable influence. There is no country in which there are so many spoiled children as in France—a circumstance which I attribute as much to indolence and vanity as to love. It would be dreadful to admit that the most exquisite sentiment in nature could produce the most pernicious results. What is more disagreeable than a spoiled child in a pinafore! what more odious than one in a frock-coat! Take, as an example, M. Paul-Auguste—we should simply say, Master Paul—the son of a Procureur Impérial. He is a handsome though pale-faced lad of fourteen, who has been taught to

relate instances, that seem rather apocryphal, of his own wonderful cleverness when young, and who in the present advanced stage of his existence knows how to enter a room more gracefully and with more assurance than many a grown-up dandy. Under ordinary circumstances, he seems full of complaisance and good-will. He never omits to present the friends of the house with a bouquet on the day of their fête; for his mother has told him that he is sure to be remembered in his turn. Few ladies, at first sight, fail to fall in love with him, and to wish, with rather indiscreet pleasantry, that he was a little older. I have seen him when opposed in his desires. He wanted to go to the theatre one evening, when his father and mother were to receive at dinner some distinguished persons who were to have great influence on his fortunes. Never shall I forget the wicked pallor of his countenance, the tyrannical mimicry of manhood he first adopted, and then the savage blubber that ensued when the opposition was too strong and nature got the upper-hand. I believe the little wretch swore. The worst of the matter was, that at sight of the first tear his mother relented, clasped him in her arms, and scolded the father for his tyranny! I could not help murmuring something about a rod, which gained me a glance over the maternal shoulder that would have made me start if it had come from a more formidable person. The

upshot of the matter was, that after an hour's discussion the young gentleman was sent to the theatre by himself; and his parents pretended that he was ill in bed, which necessitated a long series of hypocrisies.

Parents are generally satisfied to hear the enumeration of what their children have learned at school. They are more exacting as to their behaviour, every point of which is criticised with attention. Elegance and self-possession are deemed to be indispensable qualities. Many a mother's heart is smitten with grief if her son is returned to her with the ingenuous awkwardness of his age. Most schoolmasters curry to this perverted taste, and endeavour to polish their pupils into little *petits-maîtres*. But, says a man of great experience, a lad who begins to comb his hair with affectation, and to take care of his cravat, is becoming a bad scholar; his morals, if not already corrupted, are on the eve of corruption. A Bishop of the Gallican Church has published a volume on education, which would be excellent if it were not written in a corporate interest. As an instance of the way in which parents assist the schoolmaster, he tells the story of a loving father who, in order to persuade a boy to make progress with his catechism, promised him the present of *a horse*. This, however, is the system adopted at the hint of nature. In families, in

schools, and in the world, pleasure is the reward of learning. A more philosophical anecdote is that of a young mother who, speaking of the education of her children, was saying, "I have twenty years of suffering before me;" when another matron, more experienced, interposed with the observation, "Your chief suffering will begin twenty years hence." She might have added, that at that time the harvest of the seed sown by false indulgence or mere carelessness is reaped.

The time during which boys are kept at the colleges varies, of course, according to individual aptitude and other circumstances. Education is much cheaper in France than in England; and parents of middling fortunes are, consequently, not in so great a hurry to withdraw their children from school as they would otherwise be. This remark applies principally to Paris. In the provinces, as in all semi-barbarous countries, every sou spent in instruction beyond the obvious mechanical acquirements is considered by the majority to be thrown away. Deplorable, therefore, is the state of knowledge away from the centre. Careful parents, however, in the provinces as in the capital, keep their children some six or eight years at college. Holidays are rare and short—an excellent feature in one respect, but injurious in its general results. The family feeling wears out in absence; and he who

was sent forth a pet child, returns a stranger. Friendships between brothers and sisters are rarely heard of, at any rate in Paris; for elsewhere, this remark often ceases to be applicable. In genteel ranks, a young lady says, *Monsieur mon frère,* and the youth takes off his hat to her, and compliments her on her good looks. "M. de —— is about to marry my sister Aurélie, I am told," said a friend of mine; "I shall be happy to make his acquaintance." The ridiculous pair of whiskers that asks you about your "intentions" is unknown in France, where timid youth is frightened into matches less easily. This is good; but in England we do not know the species of being that, on hearing of its married sister's intrigues with So-and-So, shrugs its shoulders saying, "It is no affair of mine," and is quite ready to take a Manilla from Mr. So-and-So's cigar-case.

This would be an unpardonable digression in talking of English school education. It is scarcely so in this case. The great object of the French system is to suppress from life that disagreeable but useful period which we call boyhood—to gloss over at any rate, and hide from view, all the symptoms of mental and bodily growth. French lads consequently, except when spoiled by maternal care, are much more quiet and elegant in behaviour than English lads. At first, indeed, there seems something effeminately gentle in their manners. They rarely fight; but if

they do, it is by kicking, scratching, biting, and hair-tugging, like girls, not with the fists. It is a standing joke in Paris, that we Britons know no other amusement but boxing. A little time ago, this might have provoked a retort on the prevalence of what is called the "savate," which consists in an ignoble struggle in which two men, using all the weapons that nature has afforded them—hands, feet, nails, and teeth—endeavour to disable one another, and in which the victor, when his mutilated antagonist lies upon the ground, kicks him in the face as a proof of his triumph. This disgusting mode of fighting is going out, as are our boxing-matches, but is still resorted to by the very lower classes to decide their quarrels.

Some Frenchmen have objected to this observation, that the savate was the strategy of chiffonniers and thieves; whilst they have heard that boxing is considered a gentlemanly practice in England. But in fact, although none but mere blackguards—and dandies who ape their manners—have made a science of this mode of fighting, yet it is only the perfection of that adopted by any two Frenchmen whom chance brings into personal collision without weapons. In all the schools, too, in which I have been, the boys, when they fought, did so something in this way; and I shall always remember an English lad, who, wanting to fight a chap twice his size, was disabled

at once by a frightful kick, which might have injured him for life. These are slight matters; but perhaps in a multiplicity of such observations we shall find safer materials for judging of French character, than by noticing their collective conduct as a nation.

An observer, for whose sagacity I have the highest respect, has pointed out to me, that of late years the pugnacious spirit that used sometimes to collect crowds in the streets has so diminished as almost entirely to have disappeared. He attributes this result in a great measure to the influence of Louis Philippe's government, which certainly tended to develope effeminate sentiments. "When I was young," he says, "I rarely went out without getting into a scrape of some kind. I was always showing fight, either in resentment for an insult or in defence of oppressed weakness. Now I never see anything of the kind. Look at my son. He is a tall, strong fellow, as I was. Yet who ever saw him with a black eye, or with a skirt of his coat torn off? He is as mild as a girl. All this is, of course, very proper. I don't wish him to fight in the street; I don't want to have new coats to buy for him; and yet—this is a sign of something. It means more than that my boy is of a pacific disposition. What I observe is observed by every one. Who sees any fighting in the street now? Are we to be proud or not of this excessive softening of manners? Was not the pugnacious

spirit associated, at any rate, with some virtues which we have scarcely been careful enough to preserve—happy that we were to get rid of certain roughnesses that shocked our eyes? The new generation is a total contrast to the old one. Everybody seeks 'to save his skin,' as the people say. There is no belief in anything but material facts. I tell you that my boy is more sceptical and prudent than I am; and instead of my having to check his enthusiasm, it is he that preaches moderation to me." I am disposed to think that the criticism hinted in these words is well founded. The speaker had no direct intention of satirising his countrymen; but the fact is, that the present generation of Frenchmen, despite the talk we hear of their bloody propensities, are, as a rule, quite feminine in their aversion to strife—quite Sybaritic in their tendency. They have fought, it is true; but I remember seeing a milk-and-water lad, who had never left his mother's apron strings, after submitting to insult unbearable to common boys, suddenly turn at some petty gibe and put to flight five or six sturdy fellows, quite taken by surprise. A revolted Frenchman of the new school reminds me of this lad.

The great politician who now wields the destinies of France perfectly understood with what kind of people he had to deal. He had observed—and there is no keener observer of the defects in policy

and human nature—that former Governments had possessed the secret of exasperating the effeminate populace just up to the resisting point; and had then, as it were, thrown down their arms, terrified by the storm they had raised. He was prepared to resist the first convulsive movement—which resembled the hysterical fit of a woman; but he must have been himself surprised at the rapidity with which the whole country, covered with turbulent waves at the outset, sank suddenly into a dead calm, and shone smilingly in the sun of despotism. France felt, that to preserve its liberty, it must peril its comfort—and preferred its comfort to its liberty; just as if an elegant dandy were to give up his purse to a dirty navigator, for fear of having his shirt-front disturbed in a struggle.

This is not the only point in which French boys are fathers of French men. I am here obliged to be sparing in illustration as well as in remark. It is necessary, however, to allude to the artificial precocity produced by the circumstances in which a boy is placed, by the tone of what society he sees, by the hints contained in current language, and, above all, by the traditions that are handed down, with more than ecclesiastical precision, from one generation of fourteen to another. If my hints be charged with exaggeration, and my personal observations be appealed from, contemporary literature will supply

me with thousands of illustrations of what I mean—partly from the mouths of those who condemn, partly of those who boast directly or implicitly. I do not, however, anticipate denial, and may boldly say, that if there is anything that can be called boyhood in France it ceases so soon after infancy as not to be worth mentioning.

To discuss this subject of the education of boys at greater length would compel me to raise questions that would give too special a character to these volumes. The general deductions from what I have said are, that both the public and the private colleges undertake to teach their pupils too much, that they succeed only in impressing on the memory a few vague generalities, that they do not exercise the faculties of the mind, but that they actively develope the vanity of the individual, and allow the developement of those passions and desires to divert the attention of the young from which is, perhaps, the chief utility of school education.

To the great debate, as to whether it is proper to encourage the study of the classics, I shall but slightly refer. Without a knowledge of Latin, and even of Greek, the French could not understand their own language. It is a dispute between the Church and the University, two institutions that perpetually struggle for the honour of corrupting the French mind. Behind them are two parties, each

furiously attached to its own opinions—each profoundly believing the same absurdity; namely, that the human mind is raw material, ready to be worked up into any shape by a pious or philosophical State. Neither party cares for the great historical lesson, that every régime pretending to monopoly has been overthrown by the weapons it has itself distributed; and that no government, except in merely barbarous times, which has said, "I will make the people think thus and thus," has failed to make them think precisely the reverse. The University, in the plenitude of its power, tried the experiment, and endeavoured to inoculate the nation with its ideas of Deism, based on arguments that lead to Materialism, and oddly combined with a certain amount of moderate Liberalism in politics. It had many generations of youth in its hands, but it succeeded only in preparing the materials of a reaction against itself. From the ranks of its most assiduous pupils rose all kinds of wild and spiritual theorists, who easily gathered disciples around them, and who laughed at the cold, narrow, barren reasonings of their masters. Those who followed the paths pointed out to them refused to stop, and soon found themselves wallowing in the sublime nonsense of Pantheism. From all sides arose a cry that the University must be reformed, at any rate in spirit. The Church took advantage of the opportunity, and hung out the flag of liberty, promising to

free the country from the influence of doctrines the effect of which was to empty the mind of everything that likens it to the Divinity. At present the Church has pretty nearly got the upper hand, and is preparing a still more violent reaction; for the University, though it destroyed, or tried to destroy, all faith, at any rate endeavoured to give the people a habit of thought; whilst the object of the Church is to paralyse that faculty from which the very definition of man is drawn.

There is no nation impressed so strongly as the French with the necessity of paying learned bodies to think for them. Their Academies and their University have the same origin,—intellectual indolence, and the necessity of government in things mental as well as things material. Some few French philosophers have at length perceived that the pretensions of one man, or body of men, to guide the actions of the world without appealing to its reason, are both unjust and absurd, and have laid it down as a principle, fancying themselves second Newtons for the discovery, that there should be no *government* at all. This theory, which seems so simple to us, because, though we do not express it in words, we apply it every day, these gentlemen have innocently chosen to call the Theory of Anarchy, fancying that people look into dictionaries for the meaning of words. It was immediately believed and said, that they re-

commended the world to be in a perpetual state of breaking windows and pelting the police. The big-wigs who governed France perfectly understood what was meant, but of course raised their hands in horror, and wrote little pamphlets to confound these naughty speculators. And yet, if the philosophers had known how to express themselves—if they had not forgotten that they were speaking to a public, full of foolish prejudices it is true, but also of not illegitimate fears —they might have led the mind of France to make that one step in advance which only it requires to enable it to become political and achieve liberty.

It is, perhaps, to be hoped with reason, that some day French politicians will learn, that as there are different characters, different degrees of intelligence, different mental tendencies, different aptitudes, so there must be different systems of education—different in form and substance, each at liberty to rally its own disciples; for like will always assimilate to like. The unity which the French pursue so eagerly, as if it were the one thing needful, is much more likely to be reached approximately by the spontaneous results of uncontrolled study than by any violent means. Pressure scatters and does not amalgamate minds. To believe this, however, it is necessary to believe that there is such a thing as truth; and most Frenchmen, however fervid they may seem, are Jesting Pilates in this particular. "Bring me word of a little truth,"

cries a witty writer, "which will just suppress at the same time the hero, the hangman, and the spy; and I will proclaim the bearer of this news greater than Newton, Kepler, and Copernicus put together." France will have to wait long for a Messiah of this kind. An illustration will bring us back into the special domain of this chapter. I once heard a boy of sixteen say, "I believe nothing, because there is nothing to believe." "What are you saying there?" inquired his father, laying down his spectacles as if preparing for a discussion. "Oh," quoth the youth, turning carelessly away, "I sha'n't discuss the point, because you are an *encrouté*"—a positive old fogie, he meant.

"*Il n'y a plus d'enfans,*" said the mother, with a puzzled smile of approval.

CHAPTER X.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE UNIVERSITY OF FRANCE.

It is now a fundamental law of French society—sometimes infringed in practice, according to the spirit of the ruler for the time being—that all Frenchmen are "equal before the law." From this principle is naturally derived the equality of religious sects, although it is officially declared that France is a Catholic nation. The deductions of logic are too impartial for men who have passions and theories. At the next step, accordingly, we find that education, which should naturally be as free as the exercise of religion, is supposed to belong to a different order of things, and is made the subject of another chapter of legislation. The reason is, that the laws were framed by men who secretly considered religion, (which in its forms they absurdly divorced from what they called the religious sentiment,) as a harmless crotchet, and who were indignant at intolerance because

they thought it monstrous that the world should be disturbed, and that one individual should inflict pain upon another for trifles of no more importance than a feather in a cap. I am afraid that in all countries indifference is a greater ally of toleration than charity. At any rate, the French Solons, who, under the arbitrary eye of Napoleon I., endeavoured to modify society something in accordance with the philosophy of the eighteenth century, looked down on religious discussions as on struggles provoked by sheer folly, and decreed that every one might be as childish as he pleased, provided he refrained from interference with his neighbour. They did not seriously recognise Religion as an agent in this world's affairs.

The consequence was, that the old struggle went on upon a new field, but remained a struggle for the cure of souls. The history of its vicissitudes, and the discussion of all the questions raised around the primary one, would take me much too far. I can merely notice one or two incidents. The parties, as I have said, were the University and the Church. An account of their movements under the monarchy of July, minutely given, would seem a parody of the Middle Ages, except that the language used was more choice, and that fine and imprisonment were substituted for the fagot and the scaffold. This time, in order, it would

seem, to give the world a great lesson, Science and Learning were in possession of power; whilst Infallibility appeared as a suppliant and pleaded for its rights. The Church, with the suppleness that distinguishes that kind of institution, soon adapted itself to its circumstances. There is but one vocabulary for opposition, but one set of passions that can be appealed to for the redress of wrongs. The old apostles of passive obedience, the hereditary enemies of free discussion, took up the weapons of their former enemies, and argued for liberty with the fervour of Protestantism, and in the aggressive tone of Democracy. In the famous memorial of 1844, the bishops of the Gallican Church sneered at the idea of State authority, arrayed a set of crushing arguments against monopoly, and asked for a fair field and no favour. They stated that, in 1808, all education had been centred in the hands of the University; and, skipping over the interval from 1815 to 1830, complained that the permission given at the last-mentioned date to establish independent schools was illusory, because these schools were subject to examination and censure. Without saying what doctrines and ideas they wanted to teach in secret, they argued very plausibly that schools subject to the inspection of a vast rival establishment like the University were but nominally free. In them "liberty of conscience" was impossible.

It was a singular and suspicious circumstance to hear the heads of a church, which had formerly by all its acts proclaimed that it regarded its existence as incompatible with "liberty of conscience," reduced to appeal to that incendiary watchword. Men easily believed, that those who adopted this tone were inspired by the doctrines of Loyola, especially when Cardinal de Bonald, criticising the regulation according to which all persons examined for the office of schoolmaster were obliged to declare that they belonged to no religious congregation not legally established in France, described it as "a cruel torture for souls"—meaning that the Jesuits, who desired furtively to take part in education, were obliged to forswear themselves! At any rate the University, partly actuated by the desire of self-preservation and of absolute dominion inherent in all corporate bodies —partly in order to fulfil its mission and protect France against the knights-errant of ignorance and despotism, violently opposed the demand for liberty of instruction, and spoke by its organs with all the disdain of authority, and with nearly ecclesiastical virulence. It might have been an aristocracy defending its right to be the exclusive corn-dealers of a nation. M. Dupin, among others, denounced the movement of the clergy as "almost insurrectionary," and sagaciously observed that "he who acknowledges no master soon becomes master himself."

An abbé, too, was put in prison for libelling the University with the ferocity peculiar to his order, and several bishops wrote to soothe his solitude and deplore the interruption of his calumnious eloquence. A whole literature sprang up for the occasion. The friends of the clergy proved beyond a doubt, that the direct tendency of the University was to spread the doctrines of Deism, that it insinuated Materialism, and prepared the way for Pantheism; and the University responded by unveiling the mysteries of the confessional, and demonstrating that the Catholic doctrine, pushed to its extreme, tended, first, to prove the existence of the mind, and then to paralyse the exercise of its faculties. The bigotry and intolerance which was forbidden to show itself between rival sects, raged in the quarrel between rival schoolmasters. M. Dupin defended the sacred rights of the University with the virulence of a Pope's Legate; and M. Montalembert, beseeching that little children might be suffered to come unto him, brought to a perfection, never perhaps till then attained, the art of poisonous sarcasm, which he has since exercised with such effect in embittering the civil dissensions of his country.

The time has not yet come for complete light to be thrown on the part played by the clergy and the religious faction in sapping the foundations of Louis Philippe's throne. It should be remembered, how-

ever, that in the memorial of 1844, to which I have already alluded, the bishops distinctly stated that "in three years M. Villemain had made the Government lose all the ground it had acquired in ten years of struggling, of prudence, and ability. By constantly repeating that the University and the State were identical, he forced the people to choose between religion and the king." This, certainly, was an appeal to insurrection—a threat of abandonment, at any rate: and explains the alacrity with which the clergy tuned their throats to the chant of "*Domine, salvam fac Rempublicam;*" and then, when power changed hands, of "*Domine, salvum fac Imperatorem.*" "*Salvum fac diabolum,*" says a satirical friend, will come next; but that majesty will probably always prefer ruling by a representative.

It is said that, towards the latter years of his reign, Louis Philippe was inclined to yield something to the demands of the clergy, and only held back because the extreme liberal or Republican party also began to cry out for freedom of instruction. In this he saw a greater danger; for he knew that the Church retained very little of its active prejudices in favour of the old reigning family, and could be completely bought over by any one who would give assistance in stifling the development of the human intellect, and checking that political progress which is the great foe of ecclesiastical domination.

It asks only for confined intellects to dazzle and delude, for slavery and poverty to console. When, therefore, the Revolutionary party, which promised to destroy tyranny, to universalise knowledge, to banish misery by banishing wealth, came forward to assist the Church in its crusade for liberty, the Church looked askance at these equivocal allies, hesitated, faltered, distinguished; and his majesty thought it best to let things remain exactly as they were—the common conclusion of exhausted powers.

Before the Revolution of February the University certainly occupied a proud position, very little different from that in which it was placed by Napoleon I. I must here remark, that the word "university" in French changed its signification in 1808. Before that period it expressed the same thing as in our language; but then it came to mean, not a place of study, supplied with all means and appliances, and enjoying certain privileges, but the whole of the *personnel* of the "*corps enseignant*." The object of its founder was to create what might have been called a lay-church, taking Church to mean the corporation which is capped by the Pope, and includes all the degrees of ecclesiastical hierarchy, but excludes the congregations. It is no longer correct, therefore, to say, that any one has studied at the University of Paris; because by University is meant the entire body of teachers, from the very

lowest up to the governing council. There is no University of Paris, but there is the Academy of Paris.

The original constitution of the University was very imposing. Its head was the Grand Master, raised, at the Restoration, also to the position of Minister of Public Instruction. Then came the Council, composed of eight members with high salaries, appointed for life, and invested with judicial sanctity. By them everything connected with education was directed and governed. No person could undertake to teach even the arts of reading and writing without their consent; whilst, on the other hand, no professor could be deprived of his position and privileges but by their decree. The University was eminently an independent, self-governing body. The manifest object of its founder was to create an institution which, by its influence, should counterbalance the Catholic Church. To enable it to undertake this task with any chance of success, it was necessary to create an *esprit de corps*. The object was completely gained; and, as I have already hinted, the University, composed of the very materials which had exercised such a dissolving power in the previous century, became at once a great instrument of conservatism; as far, at least, as it is possible for the votaries of science

and letters, which are by their nature progressive, to be so.

This state of things has now, since the *coup d'état*, completely changed. The supreme direction of the University has been transferred to the hands of the Minister of Public Instruction; or, in other words, to those of the Chief of the State himself. The Council continues to exist in name; but its members are unpaid, and removable at pleasure. In order to show that its duties are merely a sham, the members chosen are for the most part people who have never paid any attention to the subject of education; or bishops, to combat whose influence the University was originally established. One of the principal personages is a jolly officer of dragoons; another is a late apothecary and episodical minister; a third, a bilious astronomer, and so on. The only one of the old council remaining is M. Saint-Marc Girardin. I shall mention an instance of the way in which discussions are carried on. Some proposition was made; a member, forgetting that he was there only *pro formâ*, lightly said that the said proposition was against common sense: upon which M. Fortoul, the minister, gravely observed that he declined discussing the matter, because the opinion impugned was not his, but had a much more august origin. It may easily be imagined

that every one cried out against the unlucky critic, protesting that the proposition was the sublime of common sense.

Formerly all professors were chosen by the Council, and were obliged to prove that they had passed certain examinations; now the minister takes them where he finds them, and makes no inquiry, except to ascertain the extent of their devotion to the Imperial government. Many piquant anecdotes have been related to me in illustration; but I refrain from repeating them, because it would be unnecessary to give pain to individuals. No doubt the pain in most cases would be merited, but I cannot volunteer to perform the office of an executioner.

Next in rank to the members of the Grand Council were the Inspectors-General, whose duty was to visit the establishments of public instruction—all educational establishments, indeed—and discover in what spirit they were carried on. Their principal vigilance was directed to find out whether the Jesuits or other advocates of the old régime had contrived in any manner to get children under their care, and whether they were teaching them corrupt views of history and theology. A few questions made to the pupils would easily enable them to discover under what influences were the minds of the children: whether, for example, they were taught that the Saint Bartholomew was a glorious day;

whether Napoleon was represented as only the lieutenant-general of the kingdom of France; whether Henri Cinq was insinuated to be the real sovereign, &c. &c. Under the new system, the number of the general inspectors has been diminished to four. The object is as much as possible to retain the nomenclature of the old University, and thus not draw attention to the fact that it is utterly destroyed. At the same time the office of these inspectors has become superfluous, because the Government has determined no longer to oppose the efforts of the clergy to give a false direction to study. It has at length discovered that the Church only can prepare the minds of youth for slavery. This, among other advantages, is an economy. The four inspectors never leave Paris, and never inspect anything.

The country was formerly divided into twenty-seven districts, each with its academy, governed by a rector and two or more inspectors. A complete academy answered nearly to our idea of a university, containing faculties of theology, law, medicine, science, and letters, with royal colleges, communal colleges, &c. The Academy of Paris was, of course, the most considerable—partly from its position, partly from the tendency there existed to send children and youth to study at the capital. At present there are academies in every department—each headed by a Rector, and each entitled to confer

degrees. The Rectors, instead of depending only on the Grand Council, are revokable on the denunciation of a bishop, a priest, or a maire. As, however, it was impossible to establish eighty faculties, there are what may be called ambulating faculties, going about from one academy to the other at stated seasons. The persons employed in this service are the *agrégés* of the colleges, or substitute professors.

A boy sent to a royal or imperial college is required to take a trousseau and to pay a thousand francs a-year. The price is fixed and uniform, and there are no extras. Those who do not board, and the number is great, pay comparatively little. One of the privileges of the former royal colleges was, that all pupils in private schools were compelled every day to go and attend certain classes; so that it was absolutely impossible that the current ideas of the day should be shut out from them. This mechanism was in itself admirably adapted to effect its purpose, and we can only regret that French legislation and philosophy could find no better means of protecting the youthful mind of the country from the disastrous influence of ultra-catholic doctrines, than by inculcating, as it did rather indirectly than directly, the doctrines of pure Deism. I do not mean to say that it was the professed object of the University to inculcate these doctrines, but their adoption was the natural and necessary consequence

of the whole system of education; as, indeed, it must be the consequence of all merely literary, scientific, or professional instruction, directed by people who regard revelation as an absurdity.

Every year, what was called a programme of studies was published for the government schools; and although the private schools were not directly compelled to abide by it, yet virtually they were so, because otherwise their pupils could not be prepared for the examinations that formed the necessary steps to all kinds of employments. Since the establishment of the Empire, the tone of the studies has been generally lowered; and in one of the programmes it is expressly forbidden "to incite the children to reason." As much as possible it is recommended to fill the memory with results, and to pass over demonstrations. The whole object of the Imperial system, which, according to the present Minister, is calculated to renew the generation in ten years, is to suppress the use of the active faculties of the mind, and even to falsify the most ordinary notions of history. Children are not allowed to advance in the annals of their own country beyond the time of Henry IV., except that they are taught the chief incidents in the reign of Napoleon. I have heard of a recent instance in which a priest explained to some pupils that the Saint Bartholomew was merely a row between the Catholics and the Protestants, in which the former

got the upper hand. One of the lads, who had heard a different account, went and asked for information from a professor of history, who gave him the real facts. He was immediately denounced, and received a letter of reprimand from the Minister, and a warning to keep his knowledge to himself for the future.

When the programme of 1852 was published, many professors were not prepared to adapt their lessons to it. A bookseller saw that it would be a good speculation to publish a series of volumes on the various departments of study. Among others was a history of Napoleon, the writer of which had not been sparing of enthusiasm. However, a literary man, though inclined to subserviency, cannot emulate the monotonous baseness of a courtier. Two phrases found their way into the epitome. One was this—a mere rhetorical qualification—"In spite of some faults," and then followed a gorgeous catalogue of the splendours of the Empire. The second was as follows: "The clergy obstinately refused to abandon the *dîme*." Both were perceived and denounced by a priest. The Minister, however, glancing over the pages, had himself picked out the sacrilegious sentences, and had sent for the author in all haste to request him to suppress them before publication. But meanwhile four copies had been sold; the denunciation of the priest complicated the affair; and the Minister was obliged publicly to reprimand the

author, who has probably since learned to tame the extravagances of his imagination. At any rate, I have not yet heard of his being on the way to Cayenne.

I have already noticed some of the changes that have taken place in the constitution of the University, and have shown that, according to the idea of its founder, it no longer exists. It is singular that the great work of Napoleon I. should have found its chief antagonist in Napoleon III. However, we must bear in mind, in order to understand this fact, that the work of destruction was commenced by the Legislative Assembly under the Republic, at the instigation of the Legitimists and the Church, and by means of what was called the Great Party of Order —a party commissioned by the then President to experiment on all the known means of repression for his future guidance. I cannot here enter into any account of the political situation of the country at that period. I must content myself with saying, that there was a kind of concordat between the Philosophers, who perceived that Catholicism was the only certain agent that could be employed to destroy the spirit of freedom, and who preferred the sacrifice of their own anti-religious sentiments to the triumph of Democracy; and the Church, which only asked to be admitted to competition with the laical teachers, reserving to itself to seize the monopoly at

the first opportunity. By the law brought forward by M. de Falloux, and supported by M. Thiers, liberty of instruction was at length granted, both to the clergy and to private individuals. Most of the Republicans felt that this was but a transitory state of things, and that the next step would be to hand over public instruction to the Church. Although, therefore, they disapproved of the constitution of the University, they defended it warmly, but in vain. The Burgraves, as the great committee organised for the overthrow of the republic in the interest of constitutional monarchy was popularly called, laughed at the sinister predictions of the Democrats, and sneeringly told them to depend on *their* ability, for that *they* had the destinies of France in their hands, and were quite as capable of arresting the reactionary movement as they were of putting a gag upon democracy. What followed is known. The Burgraves and their party were dispersed to the four winds of heaven; it was proved that, whilst they fancied they guided everything, they were the victims of a great political hoax: all their fine calculations were overthrown; their enemies, it is true, were massacred, or imprisoned, or transported, but they were laughed at, put to death morally by ridicule; and among other things the University, which they imagined they had organised for eternity, was subjected to new and more decisive manipulations.

When the *coup d'état* took place liberty of instruction was virtually withdrawn from private individuals, but maintained in the hands of the clergy. The Jesuits at present have at least forty establishments under their care, and their number is rapidly increasing. The way they proceed is characteristic. I have already said that, besides the royal, now imperial colleges, there are what are called communal colleges. These were, it is true, under the jurisdiction of the University, but were nevertheless private speculations. Since the *coup d'état* they have not been abolished, but a system of espionage and interference has been organised. Besides, parents have been persuaded or frightened from sending their children to them. In consequence they have, in many cases, failed for want of funds, or have been compelled to ask for assistance from the towns where they are established. At this juncture the Jesuits, who have hitherto remained behind the scenes, come forward, and offer to undertake the school without assistance. All the world over pecuniary considerations are powerful; but in France, which affects to despise us because we love money, and which really envies us because we possess it, more than anywhere. The most sturdy Voltairians and Encyclopædists, men who have rejoiced in the *Reverends Pères* of Béranger, are taken aback by the demand of a subsidy, and, looking at the mild

Jesuits, begin to discover that they are not such terrible people after all. He who offers anything gratis is next kin to an angel. The disciples of Loyola are almost always accepted. Some towns, however, as Soissons, have honourably declined their assistance.

There are other circumstances, however, which militate in favour of the Jesuits. Like all corporate bodies, the University had believed in its own eternity and perfection, and had obstinately refused to submit to any reform. One of the great grievances, with reason complained of, was, that the professors it furnished were almost all superior to their condition. All studied—were compelled to study, for otherwise they could not pass their examination—to fit themselves for the highest ranks; and when they were obliged to undertake the task of instructing raw boys in the mere elementary parts of knowledge, did so with lassitude and disgust. Even the pupils noticed their indifference. A Jesuit, however, is, on the contrary, essentially patient, and possesses the art of insinuation to the highest degree. He knows the importance of small matters, and displays the same persevering energy, the same power of adaptation, in governing a first form, as he would in directing the affairs of a kingdom. Parents, therefore, when called upon to decide, often prefer placing their

children under the care of men whose principles they admit to be dangerous, in order that their progress in acquirements may be rapid, promising themselves to counteract at a future period the poison that is sure to be insinuated into their minds. This fact, which is testified to by the French themselves, is peculiarly characteristic of the nation, peculiarly illustrative of its want of a keen appreciation of the value of truth, and the superiority it gives to matters of acquirement over matters of conscience. The English go to the other extreme, and deprive themselves of the incontestible advantage of public education in order that the religious and moral opinions of their children may not be tampered with. The French, who conceive us to be a mere nation of shopkeepers, cannot understand this. All the discriminating touches in our character, indeed, escape them altogether.

This notice of the past and present state of the University has already extended beyond the limits I had proposed to myself, and yet is necessarily imperfect. I have not alluded to the pernicious system, according to which University degrees are granted—to the unnatural straining of the faculties at stated periods—to the necessity imposed from time to time of laying aside all serious study, in order to get up what may be called the table of contents of knowledge. This, however, would lead me to examine

the whole subject of education, and force me to fetch illustrations from England. Suffice it to say that all, or almost all, theoretical writers in France, have condemned the attempt made to render every student an encylopædia. This is not the place to touch on the constitution of the Polytechnic School. It is common to hear the expression, "Europe envies us the Polytechnic School." But that school has been condemned by experience, and is only kept up because the nation is ashamed to abolish it and admit its error. The best thinkers in France now acknowledge, that the science of engineering has been retarded instead of being advanced by this much-bepraised institution. The students, however, are taught to consider themselves as occupying the post of honour in civilisation, and are generally rough and overbearing in manners.

I must observe, that the Bachelorship of Letters is now no longer the first necessary step in the student's progress. Young men are allowed to choose between that and the Bachelorship of Sciences. The object, of course, is to discourage the pursuit of literature, always the great enemy of autocracy. Mathematicians and natural philosophers have ever been tolerably well inclined to put up with despotism, which is favourable to the quiet necessary for study. For the same reason there is a disposition to disparage classical learning; and I

hear daily paraphrases on Hobbes' great attack upon Grecian literature. We shall see in a few years what will be the effect produced; but although I admit that the present wielder of authority has studied with marvellous attention, and collected into a complete code all the means by which absolute governments have prevented the explosion of thought in their dominions, I doubt whether he will succeed in suppressing the activity that already exists. Ideas may be stopped for a time, like contraband goods at a frontier, but they cannot be eradicated from men's minds. In religious persecutions, symbols and books are sometimes ineffectually hid away in caves; but faith retires to an inexpugnable fortress. Thus ideas of liberty, combated in schools, erased from the press, frightened from common conversation, will continue to be nursed in the family circle, and implied in the very language in daily use. To prevent their transmission it would be necessary to expurgate the dictionary, and invent a fresh vocabulary. The consequence will probably be, that the new generation will forget the absurdities, the errors, and the crimes of their fathers; freedom will take again the beautiful hues of distance; it will again appear that a nation has only to desire liberty to enjoy it; youth will forget, or rather they will not have learned, that those who would themselves govern must submit to some privations, and make up

their minds to some exertion; the indolent will once more imagine that the honour of citizenship may co-exist at the same time with the comfortable carelessness of slavery; and a great unreasoning aspiration for better times may, by its explosion, toss the pedants of despotism into the insignificance from which they have emerged. The monstrous attempt of one man to domineer over millions of expanding souls, to choose their nourishment, to arbitrate on their growth, and to point out the path they must travel, cannot remain without its punishment. Meanwhile it will serve as a proof to those who yet remain incredulous that, however much France may deserve its present abasement, it desires better things, and does not voluntarily bow the head. What necessity would there be to remodel the generation, if the generation had really received its master with transport? For my part, my old attachment to France struggles against the severity of my convictions. I might rejoice to see it deprived of liberty for a time, because, when it acquired liberty, it knew not how to use it. But all its children seized by a new kind of conscription, to be experimented on by Jesuits and priests—to be systematically furnished with false conceptions of history, philosophy, and morality—to be gradually shut off from communion with all great souls—to be intellectually maimed and blinded—to be inoculated

with the degrading sentiment of loyalty—the spaniel's virtue, the patriotism of the kennel,—really the punishment is too great, or would be too great, if it were not tamely borne! What I fear is, that in the minds of all this youth in bondage there will be formed nothing but a great negative, which will produce itself some day in convulsion and massacre without an object: for all the years passed under the present régime are years lost to progress; and if a Constitutional Monarchy could not prepare the French for self-government, will an Empire?

CHAPTER XI.

Reading Men—Celebrity—Public Libraries—The College of France and the Institute—French Savans—Ignorance—French Language—Knowing Gentlemen—Geographical Blunders—The Mamelukes—Books of Travels—Political Economy—The Young Noblesse—How Knowledge is Lost—Revolution of '89—Relics of Barbarism—Property and Mind—Laws of Inheritance—Peasant Ignorance—The Electors—The Malforts and the Ribcaumonts—Literature in the Provinces—Skin-deep Civilisation.

I HAVE not said much of "the reading men" among the students, because this class is very much alike in all countries. Most persons will admit that it does not play any very conspicuous part in giving a character to a nation. Those who obtain the highest prizes in colleges and universities are seldom heard of afterwards in the world. "Did you ever know a Senior Wrangler who was not an ass?" the other day said the wittiest and the least reasonable of our members of parliament, exaggerating to the limits of injustice an observation that is beginning to be found in everybody's mouth. In France, the men

who afterwards distinguish themselves have generally led rather a wild life as students, mixing, however, a good deal of poetry and romance with their wildness. Every year a certain proportion of them, who have been destined by their parents to seek the positive profits of the legal or the medical profession, are seduced by what seem to be the facile triumphs of literature, and instead of attending hospitals, or poring over the Institutes, take to poetry, the drama, or fiction, and persuade themselves that honours and wealth will, by their means, come to them in time to be enjoyed. Perhaps, in other countries also, the greater number of those who pretend to be in search of literary fame are anxious only for the applause of women, and believe at any rate that the shouts of public enthusiasm will carry their names effectually to ears which otherwise would never listen to their tender complaints. At any rate, most young French authors seem more anxious to obtain a sudden and coterie reputation than to produce complete works of art. And, after all, what is celebrity? "It is," says Champfort, "the advantage of being known by those of whom you know nothing." A literature which addresses itself to what may be called a local public must always have certain remarkable qualities, and taken altogether, with due deductions for personal eccentricities and extravagances, and a total elimination of that great portion

which is mere conventional filling-up, must accurately represent the general character of a period.

The means of study at command in Paris are, perhaps, superior to any that may be found in the world. In the first place, books are very cheap, not only reprints and works of the day, but even books of reference. The public libraries are numerous and extensive. It is true, there are no catalogues accessible to the public. That at the Rue de Richelieu has never yet been copied out, but is made on cards, nicely arranged in little boxes. "What do you do," said a visitor, "if a box falls and the cards are scattered abroad?" "We pick them up and arrange them again," was the reply. The consequence is, that a stranger is obliged to know beforehand the title of the book he wants. However, the librarians are, in general, learned and accomplished men; and not only so, but remarkably affable and obliging whenever they are applied to by persons who really wish to study seriously.

Formerly, the system of lending books to authors and students, properly recommended, was carried to an absurd extent. One gentleman, when editing Molière, was allowed to keep all the editions of that poet belonging to one library for four years; and another writer took home, for an indefinite period, all the books which, directly or indirectly, referred to the history of Bretagne. However, as many

losses occurred, the same facilities are no longer afforded—at any rate to the same extent. In spite of the great number of reading-rooms in Paris, they are nearly always full. Readers rush to their places as soon as the doors are open, and claim the books which have been carefully kept for them since the day before. New-comers are often obliged to wait until the last hour to get a place. Some libraries, as that of Ste. Geneviève in the students' quarter, are open in the evening, and in winter are said to be frequented by poor learned men and aspirants for knowledge who have not wherewith to pay for a fire at home. An idea may be formed of the completeness of the public-library system in Paris from the fact that I have heard complaints made of the want of an administrative library.

The College of France is an institution of the principle, of which the French may well be proud. It was established under Francis I. as a means by which any new sciences that make their appearance in the world might find a voice, and a position from which to address the young and the inquiring. It has only recently been brought under the jurisdiction of the University, having been formerly almost a part of the royal household. The professors were named directly by the chief of the State, and received their emoluments from him. The lectures are open to all comers gratis, and sometimes

even this publicity has degenerated into abuse. People go in to eat their lunch near the stove, whilst some learned man is discoursing to a select audience of adepts on Greek roots or Oriental conjugations.

The Institute of France, which has an entirely independent existence, except that it receives from the Government a sum of about 22,000*l.* sterling per annum—exactly what is granted to the Grand Opera to enable it to pay extravagant prices to Alboni and Cruvelli—is an extremely useful institution considered as a means of collecting and preserving the heavy materials of knowledge. It is composed of five academies, the first of which, the French Academy *par excellence*, has fallen into contempt from the subserviency of its members, who fill vacant chairs with people whose claims are not literary but political—with the pets of parties and not with the glories of the country. Some of the other academies have published, as is well known, many valuable series of memoirs and historical collections, which it would surpass the strength of any private individual to undertake. The Academy of Moral and Political Sciences has brought forth a collection of pamphlets against the Socialists, which have done more harm to the cause they were intended to support than to its adversaries. Extravagant theories are often assisted by injudicious opponents like these, who do not answer from the abundance of their conviction,

but as a mere matter of duty; and who, looking upon themselves as the depositaries of all the knowledge in a country, presume to address grown men as they would children, and scold and coax instead of reasoning. It is worthy of remark, that the members of this establishment have not shown much subserviency to the new order of things. When M. Lebrun, one of the members, was appointed senator, he was for some time ashamed to appear among his colleagues; and on New-year's Day lots are drawn to decide who shall go and pay his Majesty the compliments of the season,—just as the sailors of the Medusa decided who should next be eaten.

It would be useless to enumerate all the means of knowledge which are at the disposal of the French public. Their very existence proves that there must be a class, however limited, with sufficient influence upon the Government to induce it to patronise knowledge and give a literary colour to the institutions of the country; and, in fact, we find that there is a body of men, some marshalled in academies, others not so, who altogether may be said to be in possession of the complete results of modern intellectual development. I am very far from wishing to depreciate our own learned men in order to set up the rival claims of others; and, indeed, I cannot pretend to be competent to strike the balance. But it is my impression that, looking upon the *savans* of Paris as constituting a particular class, they may be

considered as superior in completeness of knowledge to any corresponding class in any country. I do not give this simply as my own opinion, nor am I prepared to maintain it; to judge of others, one must know what they know: but it is the result of a comparison of the admissions made by impartial foreigners of all origins. Even the most national elect France by the election of Aristides.

Having said thus much, I am obliged to add that current French society is about the most ill-informed that can be met with. Coleridge could not understand the ignorance of Plato. Anybody who is not dazzled by a few well-chosen words learned by heart may understand the ignorance of the French. One of their writers protests very violently that his country ought not to be despised for submitting to the *coup d'état*, exclaiming, among other absurdities, "A day of humiliation for France would be a hundred thousand times worse than the passion of the Man-God." He, therefore, can scarcely be suspected of a design to depreciate; yet, descending from this altitude, he says that France is the country in which there exists the widest division or gap between civilisation and barbarism—in other words, that the cultivation and refinement so much talked of is restricted to a class, and that underneath may be found the extremest ignorance. This, so far as it goes, is a correct representation. It is necessary to add, that

the rank and file of what may be called the civilised classes have rather the appearance of knowledge than knowledge itself. This fact might be predicated on several distinct grounds. It might be proved, both from what we have seen of the way in which education is carried on and from the whole tenor of recent history. The French mind possesses some wonderful qualities, rarely sufficiently developed. It excels in seizing on any ideas that may be painfully elaborated by thinkers of other nations, and expressing them with so great a lucidity and clearness that they seem perfectly new, and are scarcely recognised by their inventors. Communicative eloquence also is one of their gifts, which no nation possesses in an equal degree. They seem formed to be the expositors of new doctrines, the apostles of opinion. It is impossible to exaggerate their power of propagating ideas through the world. They have a language which, if not precise or philosophical, appears to make even the obscurest things clear, and often persuades without leaving any impression. It has none of the angles or the stops that provoke inquiry—breaking up the stream of a discourse like rocky barriers and islands; but flows on smooth and level, and seems to reflect all things with perfect accuracy until we look up at the sharp, bold forms of nature. The French, to forsake this comparison, have brought the use of their weapon to the highest perfection. It

is not a sabre or a battle-axe; it is a small-sword, that sometimes degenerates into a poignard. By its aid they attack with equal success the prejudices and the principles of the world. For it is necessary to admit that this nation, formed to play so conspicuous a part in the civilisation of mankind, has often abandoned its high destiny, and has exercised its power of persuasion in propagating errors, and its power of attack in destroying things most respectable and useful.

To say that French society is ignorant appears a very sweeping assertion, and I do not do so without some fear of laying myself open to blame. By ignorant, I mean unprovided with that general information on geography, history, statistics, political and moral philosophy, which forms the basis, more or less solid, of public opinion in England. Special men are usually well up in their particular departments; and I believe it is admitted that they are superior in acquaintance with the generalities of science to us, whilst their deficiency lies in practice. French engineers are perfect in their theory, French physicians inimitable in diagnosis; but we construct finer works and cure more patients than they.

When you first enter into conversation with a young Frenchman in good society, he generally begins by surprising you with the extent of his acquirements. An Englishman of the same class

will bear no comparison. The other knows the names of all arts and sciences, and the elementary vocabulary of each. He has learned them at his academy, and used them in passing examinations. It is natural to suppose at the outset, that he who seems to know the geography of knowledge, the situations and frontiers of its kingdoms, must be an all-accomplished man. If you push your interlocutor, however, on any one point he will become uneasy, and try to escape, which politeness will compel you to allow him to do. Most Frenchmen have by them a shrewd remark or two, made use of to suggest their acquaintance with the science of philology, in which they are in truth peculiarly deficient. An amusing instance is that of a sprightly gentleman, who thought he had heard the lady of the house where I was say that I had just returned from Greece; upon which he felt bound to make a learned disquisition on the Romaic, based, as I soon perceived, upon a single word which he had caught up. Another one took me by the button, and stated it as his opinion that the Fellatahs were an Egyptian colony, because he knew that there were fellahs (labourers) in Egypt. What surprised me most was the glibness, the ease, and the ingenious manner in which these things were put forward. In less flagrant cases, not being a very profound philologist, I have been often quite bewildered by observations put forward

in the most deliberate tone, but which afterwards proved to be mere fancies struck out for effect.

In general, the magisterial way in which young Frenchmen, fresh from their studies, decide on all questions, political, moral, and scientific, excites some wonder and not a little admiration. Self-possession is a great quality. They never say, "I don't know—I don't understand that subject." A friend of mine once even reproached me with too often admitting my ignorance: "You will be thought nothing of," said he, "if you don't cure yourself of that habit."

There are two causes for this extreme assumption: first, the natural vanity of the people; and, secondly, the affected completeness of the round of education. To plead ignorance is not only to admit intellectual inferiority, but to acknowledge that the opportunities of knowledge existing have not been taken advantage of, probably from humility of position. As the Government undertakes to teach everything, there is nothing which everybody is not bound to know.

No doubt there is much to add to the excellence of the education of what are called the educated classes in England. Even geography, about which we know more than all the other nations of the world put together, is learned by many piecemeal; and Lord Palmerston's sarcastic observation, that

many of his opponents were not aware of the positions or the existence of certain Asiatic cities until they read his despatches, may have been true. However, it is rare to meet amongst us examples of the mental destitution so common in France. Even those whose business it is to be acquainted with the resources and characteristics of foreign countries are content with having a good system of geography on their shelves and a map upon their walls. M. Baroche, when Minister of Foreign Affairs, appointed a Consul to Mosoul *in Abyssinia;* and a well-known learned man had his book translated into Spanish, that it might be read at Rio Janeiro. There is an authentic instance of a statesman who mistook Transylvania for Pennsylvania. A friend was once travelling in the Aîne, and had the following conversation with a member of the Council-General of that department: "You come from the East, do you not?"—"Yes." "Do you speak what are called the Oriental languages?"—"Some of them." "But do not people in those countries speak them?"—"No; not all. The Turks speak Turkish; the Arabs Arabic, and so forth." "Indeed! that is droll. Of what use, *then,* are professors of Oriental languages in Paris?"—"To teach persons connected with diplomacy." "By the way, what is the Grand Turk?"—"It is the old name of the Sultan." "Very good. I must tell you

I have an idea. The reason that France has ceased to have influence in the East is that there are no longer any Mamelukes in France. What has become of the Mamelukes?" This worthy gentleman, being as unacquainted with the history of his own country as with geography, would probably have stared if he had been told that, whilst he was a young man, the colony of Egyptians established at Marseilles was massacred, man, woman, and child, by the Royalists in 1815; but that the Mamelukes of which he spoke were simply a corps so called, instituted by Napoleon, equivalent to the present corps of Spahis.

Although it is pompously announced by the colleges that the pupils are taught geography, they learn nothing but a kind of catechism containing the names of the capitals of countries, and one or two epigrammatic, and, of course, erroneous, ideas connected therewith, which stick to them through life, even if they afterwards attempt to read. I believe this is the origin of their obstinate notion that England, or London, is a city built in the centre of a misty lagoon—a sort of Venice in the Fogs. There is no Chair of Geography in France, except one at the Sorbonne, where the professor busies himself principally with classical times. In the best society tolerably correct notions are entertained of the outlines of ancient Greece, but few know anything of the results of modern discovery. This is one reason of

the intense astonishment created by the enterprising and unfortunate Lieutenant Bellot.

The popular books of travels in France are those which are so mixed with fiction that it is impossible to place any reliance upon them. Every Frenchman starts with an idea that he must be the hero of some wonderful personal adventures, or the author of some remarkable discoveries. I remember a slight but characteristic instance of the lightness with which they write. M. Marcellus quotes a Greek song, "improvised" in his presence by an Armenian. This song is as old as the hills, and known in every village in European Turkey. One unfortunate circumstance is, that the vivid but incorrect accounts which have been published have left an impression, even on the most serious men, that they know all that can be known. M. M——, when attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was offered some valuable documents descriptive of a country which every one supposed was to become the seat of war. He refused them in an off-hand manner, saying, "*Nous savons tout cela.*"

I am fond of relating my conversation with a clever dramatist. He told me he was writing a five-act comedy to satirise the English. "Satirise away," said I; "I wish you could cure us of some of our absurdities. No doubt you have brought back a good crop of them from England." "I have never

been in England," quoth he. "But," said I, apologising for him, superfluously imagining that my remark was embarrassing, "conversation with some of the specimens you meet abroad may perhaps suffice." He could not speak a word of English. Persisting in my benevolence, I suggested that he might have got his ideas from reading our literature; but the only word of our language he knew was *sportmen;* and it turned out that he was going to make fun of our Newmarket aristocracy, our stable minds, and our amateur coachmen. I wished him great success in his undertaking.

These few facts will give an idea of the kind of ignorance that prevails in France on geography. It is ignorance based on complete indifference as to what takes place beyond the frontier. In other departments other causes produce similar results. With the exception of a few studious men, whose tendency is always to push principles to their extreme consequences, no one knows anything of political economy. I might give a hundred instances, but the well-known fact will suffice that all Frenchmen, of all parties, from the advocates of Autocracy to the disciples of Socialism—all round the hoop of speculation, indeed—believe that the State is the creator and distributor of wealth, and upon it rely for existence, quite as much as they depend upon the Church for salvation.

The relics of the old noble families are in general but slightly informed. Under the July Monarchy they used to send their children to be educated by the Jesuits at Fribourg, or at Bagnolet in Belgium, near the French frontier, or else at the free-schools, or kept them at home, always under the care of ecclesiastics. There are booksellers who sell books made on purpose for this generation—histories of the Revolution, of the Church; essays on chemistry, political economy, and so on—all filled with the most comical misrepresentations. They exert great influence, being warranted by the Clergy. A friend once heard it naively stated in a large company by a gentleman, who was holding forth on the advantages and pleasures of science, that chemistry had rendered great service to the cause of Order, for careful analysis had proved that the blood of the well-born contained more oxygen than that of the ill-born—a clear confirmation of the divine institution of rank! There are some small agricultural towns which have been chosen as favourite places of residence by the old aristocracy, who amuse their leisure hours by studying heraldry and genealogy, which are so highly conducive to the preservation of a Christian spirit. Latterly, however, the noblesse has begun to detach some of its members to join what are called the Agricultural Comitiæ. Others form part of the Archæological Societies, many of which have been

founded by the clergy with political aims. By glorifying, for example, the architecture of the middle ages, they try to cast a halo upon everything that was contemporary. It required a Jesuitical knowledge of human nature to hit out this plan; but it has proved successful, and seemingly intelligent men have been converted to Catholicism by wandering in ancient cathedrals.

Some of the young nobles come to Paris to study law without any intention of practising, but few are influenced in any permanent manner. They retain their stubborn prejudices and unfounded vanity, because they remain under priestly and party influences. One uniform direction is given to their minds. In conversation they all boldly declare that the letters of Pascal are mere calumnies, diabolical inventions; that Father Loriquet is a great historian; and that pictures have been known to wink and weep. It is this obstinate adherence to a track marked out for them on which I chiefly base my conviction that everything may be overturned in France, but that this presumptuous and narrow-minded race can never return to power, and is indeed destined to leave no known posterity.

It is wonderful with what facility young men of all classes, who have pursued their studies in Paris, when removed to the country, lose the varnish they have received, and become mere billiard-players,

drinkers of *petits-verres*, smokers, and talkers of oxen. Only chosen natures in all countries, perhaps, can resist provincial influences. As a collateral example of the way in which instruction may be lost I shall mention an instance of a young painter, who gave himself up so much to the manual part of his art that in six years he came to spell like a cookmaid on the few occasions when he took the trouble to write. He recovered, however, when, from some reason of self-love, he was compelled to use his pen. Instances of complete degradation of seemingly poetical students into opaque peasants have come under my notice. M. D—— went away after he had finished his medical studies a lively, witty, knowing fellow, and came back to buy drugs three years afterwards, fat and foolish, and talking with awe of the sub-prefect of his department. Similar facts have constantly presented themselves, and I am inclined to take them as proofs of the very slight degree to which instruction enters the French mind.

Sufficient attention has not yet, perhaps, been directed to the fact, that in 1789 the vast majority of the French nation were not only serfs, but mere barbarians—almost savages. That such was the case, may be proved by the admissions of historical writers of both the great parties; for those who favour the Revolution point very naturally to the

degraded state of the mass as a condemnation of the Royal Government, whilst their adversaries triumphantly adduce the barbarism of the people to show that political power ought not to have been given them. By all accounts the peasantry were ill-clothed, ill-lodged, ill-fed, full of ignorance, superstition, and prejudice. In no country, perhaps, were there so many local differences, so many varieties in language and manners. The Monarchy, which boasted of its thousand years' duration, had done nothing towards assimilating the various elements of the nation. The Breton and the Franche-Comtois, the Fleming and the Provençal, remained nearly what feudality had left them. All refinement and all knowledge were concentrated in the courtiers, the magistracy, and a small portion of the middle classes. The Revolution seized on the rough ore that lay scattered over the country, and cast it suddenly into its fiery crucible. Its civilising effect was marvellous, but it could not be successful at once. A century more will probably elapse before the uncultivated tribes of which the nation is in great part composed are elevated to the dignity of citizenship. Very clever and authoritative writers have said that every Frenchman understands every word of his language. This is too absurd to be refuted. The fact is, setting aside the Provençals, that one half the population cannot comprehend what the other half

says. Nearly all the agricultural districts use *patois*, or dialects more or less harsh and disagreeable in sound. The real French language is spoken only by a very small proportion of the people.

In various parts of the country are found tribes, which travellers not inclined to circumnavigate the globe, yet desirous of studying human nature in its lowest possible state, visit and examine, as they would the inhabitants of the Andaman islands. Of course these places voted unanimously for the Empire. Even up to the great Revolution there remained traces of Phallic worship in the Limousin, where loaves of a peculiar shape were distributed on a certain day: and still later, in Poitiers, there is said to have existed a much more singular relic of the same obscene rites. In the neighbourhood of Paris the Druidical fires are burned on St. John's Day, though none of the peasants can tell why: and the Enfants de Chœur, in the procession of the Fête Dieu, renewed from the Greeks, shed incense and flowers before the holy sacrament. Here and there—not only in the Landes and Auvergne, but even in Franche-Comté—are colonies of Spaniards, whose origin can be traced in their features and speech. The Corsicans are still almost as wild in character as the Bedawins. The Bretons, despite the schools established under Louis Philippe in order to civilise them, are still disgracefully barbarous. No moral

teachings were effectual to check, among other things, their propensities to intoxication; whatever was done was by means of satirical ballads, an evidence of an extremely low state. In the southern provinces the people exhibit many Eastern customs and traits of character, and it is necessary to remember this in estimating their conduct.

Without referring to particular divisions of the people it may be said,—and in support of this statement native authorities can be quoted to infinity,—that the French peasant, taken altogether, is almost unequalled in brutality, and ignorance, and sordidness. The possession of land seems to have a stupifying and demoralising influence in most countries, unless counteracted by very highly-wrought education. Is property really "robbery," that its holders pay the same penalty as other criminals in the destruction of their intellects? I have sometimes asked myself this absurd question, when thinking of the violent antipathy to slave-grown sugar of the party which fought for slavery to the last gasp. The tendency of violence and fraud seems to be to debase man to the level of the beasts which have such characteristics. Cunning men have foxy looks and foxy minds, and cruel women have the eyes of tigers. Modern philosophers, who know everything, tell us that we have ripened out of an inferior grade of animals. I am disposed to think, that in the case of

the French peasantry the process is not quite completed. Their existence under present conditions is owing, as every one knows, to their emancipation at the Revolution of '89: since which time the entire efforts of the little mind they possess have been directed to the acquisition of landed property. There is a singular illusion abroad, to the effect that the vast number of small holdings that now exist is the result of the operation of the law of equal inheritance. The tendency of that law is certainly to multiply estates; but when we reflect that French families rarely exceed two or three in number, and that girls inherit as well as boys, it will be evident, that in a country that only doubles its population once in a hundred years, very little effect can have been hitherto produced. Some say that the average number of children to a marriage is four, of which two, at least, die before the age of thirty-six. The two remaining inherit two fortunes, the paternal and the maternal; so that the number of estates ought not to diminish at all. The real cause of the increase of properties, until lately, has been the desire of acquisition that torments the peasantry, and induces them to bid high for small allotments. When an estate is to be sold it is generally cut up, because it fetches more in small parcels. The great landholders are gradually leaving the soil to be developed by those who occupy it. The peasants will make

any sacrifices to escape the obligation of paying rent. If there be a piece of land to be sold for a thousand francs, and they have only five hundred, they borrow the remainder at an interest which the land can scarcely return them. This is the explanation of the constant complaint of the Socialists, that "usury gnaws away the provinces," and accounts for the existence of the Communist sects among the chief supporters of the Empire.

At present the extreme limit of the division of property seems to have been reached, and there is a tendency in land to collect in comparatively large farms. In this case, as in every other, the principle of free trade has been found useful. Those who can make use of land acquire it, and those who cannot give it up. Nothing is commoner, for example, than for two young men to whom a house and vineyard have been left to agree that one shall keep the property, whilst the other, with half the proceeds, shall start in life, go up to Paris, or to the chief place of the department, or even work in the village. Economists, whose great fear seems to be that their theories will not be able to manage the world when properly replenished, point with pleasure to the fact, that in the same proportion that land has become divided, "imprudent marriages" have diminished; and glory in the state of immorality, which is the necessary result of leaving an ignorant and unprincipled youth with-

out family ties during ten or twelve of the most vigorous years of their lives.

It is difficult to convey an idea of the deplorable ignorance of the agricultural classes in France. Forty per cent of the whole population of the country can neither read nor write, and a still greater proportion does not use the little knowledge it possesses. Children go to school in the provinces up to the time of the first communion, about the age of twelve years, and are then sent into the fields. The only faculty strongly developed by education and example is that of acquisitiveness. It is really wonderful to witness the eagerness with which young and old men and women dispute for a liard. I am sometimes strongly reminded of the Egyptian fellahs. It would be a curious task to compare the low cunning of the *paysans*, by which they enrich themselves, with the wit of the Irishman, which leaves him poor.

I cannot here give an account of the state of the French provinces, for my object is only to indicate out of what raw material the ornamental specimens that claim so great a superiority over the rest of the world are manufactured. One anecdote, however, occurs to me worth relating. At Abbeville, two electors under Louis Philippe's reign—that is, rich men paying heavy contributions to the State—were discussing the relative merits of a candidate. One said, "I shall vote for M. C——, because he has two hundred thousand

écus worth of land under the sun." The other replied, "I shall vote for M. R——, because he is a cunning dog. He had a trial with Pierre for the little farm down yonder, *and gained his cause!*" They choose their candidates for their wealth. Another man voted for De Tocqueville, because the electioneering agent told him that the great writer earned three hundred thousand francs a-year by his books. I suppose these creatures would be admired by some in England, who talk of the "legitimate influence of property;" but we may be quite sure, that a class that confounds political capacity with the power of acquiring riches will always, if allowed to work its will, lead a nation to ruin. When the two hundred thousand electors who sold France under Louis Philippe were displaced, the classes under them were found to share their sordid ideas. It is absurd to expect to see a virtuous and high-minded people in bondage to a corrupt order. The poor peasants shared the base principles of their superiors. They hated the Republic, because they had to pay forty-five centimes additional towards the temporary necessities of the State; and were blind to all reason until they could revenge this act of "spoliation," by bringing themselves and the rest of the country under the yoke of despotism.

Some of the vulgar opinions of the French peasantry are probably shared amongst us. They

believe firmly that all tax-gatherers make their fortunes by pocketing the money of the people. This may be a tradition from the times of the old monarchy. Not many years ago the peasants of the Berri nearly assassinated Dr. Hepin for trying to introduce a new kind of plough. Up to a very short period before the great Revolution, in many provinces, oxen were used to draw gentlemen's carriages. Even now the horse has not replaced horned cattle to anything like the same extent as in England. Pierre Dupont, in his song of "*Les Bœufs,*" has capitally described the intense attachment of the peasants for their oxen, which equals almost that of the Arab for his horse.

In talking over, with some friends, this subject of the state of the provinces, in connexion with the rapid deterioration of what are called the educated and refined classes under unfavourable circumstances, some curious instances were brought forward of the rapidity with which even local facts are forgotten in the present state of France. One gentleman, an artist, wandering about the Limousin, fell upon a mass of ruins near Brives, called the Castle of Malfort. He compared it, oddly, to an old single tooth left in a jaw. Next day he went to a party, where all the principal people of the place were assembled, and made careful inquiries. No one had ever heard who the Malforts were; and yet it turned out that

in 1787 a celebrated lawyer, afterwards member of the Constituant and of Napoleon's Senate, had pleaded the cause of the town of Brives against the Lords of Malfort, who wished to overthrow the walls of the town. In any other country, over which the hurricane of Revolution had not swept, accurate and affecting traditions would, most probably, have been preserved with reference to the family that inhabited so remarkable a ruin. Perhaps, in one sense, this oblivion is commendable and useful: for there is nothing that degrades the mind so much as the habit existing in our own provincial places of dwelling with fondness on the sayings and doings of "the first families of the county." But in the cases of which I speak there seems reason to believe that people have forgotten, because they have descended in the social scale, approached nearer to the level of the beasts that perish, and are perfectly indifferent to everything save the enjoyment, or, rather, the gains of the present hour.

A still more curious instance was mentioned with reference to the same province of the Limousin. The narrator observed another castle, called Ribeaumont. He sought, in vain, to whom this castle formerly belonged. At length he met an old peasant, whom he asked if there were any more Ribeaumonts remaining in the country? The reply was in the affirmative.

"But," said M. J——, "every one tells me that there is no longer a family of that name, and I have looked in the almanac and cannot find it." "That may be," answered the peasant; "but if all the almanacs were to say to the contrary, I should still say, yes."—"I suppose you must know!"—"To be sure I do. In fact, I am a Ribeaumont myself; and not only so, but the head of the family. In 1789 I was sent as the representative of the nobility of the Limousin to the States-General, and at that time I was living in that castle." M. J—— went with the peasant, who was now quite a common-spoken man, without the least trace of former refinement, to his cottage, where he lived among pigs, &c. What he had said proved to be perfectly true.

The backwardness of the provinces, as compared with the capital, exhibits itself in a thousand different ways. Even the scientific men, in those benighted regions, rely on works published thirty or forty years ago, and quite obsolete in Paris. Booksellers in the country are generally stationers. Authors print their own works. Orders sent from Paris are answered only in three or four months, or not at all. You write for one thing, and they send you another. It is impossible to establish connexions with them, except in the very large towns, for the sale of new books. There is no curiosity. The whole country

sleeps in satisfied ignorance. Such were the complaints made to me by one who has had experience. "Why do you not apply yourself to literature, to studying the history of this part of the country, for example?" inquired a friend of mine of an unoccupied, but clever young man. "I should like to do so," he replied; "but I should at once be looked upon as lost. I want to marry, and no family would receive me if I applied myself to letters; unless, of course, I achieved great success."

I have heard many attempts made to calculate the relative proportions of the civilised and the uncivilised populations of France. It is certain the latter constitute the great majority; whilst the former, unless kept up to a certain mark during the time of their studies, or in the exercise of functions requiring intellectual exertion, constantly tend to join the inert mass. This phenomenon is, perhaps, nowhere else observable to the same extent. In other countries the educated classes seem indeed to be gradually increased by new recruits, and to hold the ground they have acquired. In France there is little progress of this kind. The exigencies of the country constantly call into birth and consume a certain amount of intellectual power and knowledge, but the culture is for the most part only external. It does not penetrate into the mind. Those who

have witnessed the extraordinary deterioration in the tone of society, in literature, in public spirit, and morality, since Despotism has taken charge of all the great business of the country, will easily admit the truth of those statements.

CHAPTER XII.

Agricole Passager—Country Propriétaires—A Student sent to Paris—Division of Property—Struggle for Distinction—Arduous Undertaking—Small Means—Career of Agricole—His Affairs of the Heart—French Ladies—Passion and Genius—Seeking for Lodgings—Wilful Poverty—Reminiscences of Fifine—A Biographer—Fifine, what—How Agricole was fitted out—First Day in Paris—His Expenses—Sufferings of poor Students—The Poor Bachelor in Paris—His Philosophy and Manners—His Resources—Confession of the Poor Bachelor—Expenses of the Day—A Crémerie—Playing at Dominoes—Delights of Laziness—Object of Life—Superstitious Sceptic—Politics of the Poor Bachelor—The Conservative Citizen—M. Croquignole—Another Species—Atrocious Morality—Bad Books and Bad Men—M. Croquignole's Den—A noisy Hôtel—Seeing Life.

THE proportion of students born in Paris to those who come up from the country is naturally very small. A true Parisian is an exception among them. What I am about to relate, therefore, of the experience of Agricole Passager, from what I have seen, or from what he has over and over repeated to me himself, may be extended, making due deductions of what must necessarily be individual, to a

very large class. From time to time, as I proceed, I shall allow my pen to wander at will out of the straight path, trusting to its instinct—just as a knight of romance occasionally throws the reins upon his horse's neck, and wanders through a forest, where he generally meets with some beautiful maiden or some hospitable castle.

Agricole came from the neighbourhood of Poitiers. His father was a small *propriétaire*—not to say landowner, which would suggest a false idea. A *propriétaire* in France may be a gentleman or a farmer, or even a common peasant. His estate frequently is worthy only the name of an allotment, and he ekes out his living by working in neighbouring fields. Many of the owners of the vineyards where is grown the Hermitage wine are carters or ferrymen. In some provinces these lords of the soil have been seen ploughing with their wife yoked by the side of a single ox. Père Passager was a little above this, for his land yielded him some three thousand francs a-year (120*l.*) Out of this he supported himself, his wife, three daughters, and one son at school, besides M. Agricole, dispatched to Paris to illustrate the family, with the absolute disposal of one thousand francs per annum, which reduced his father's income by a third.

I am obliged to keep rigidly to facts, and to coarse, plain inferences; which I regret, because the

suppression of economical details, the forgetfulness of certain recondite rules of morality, might enable me to change a mere illustrative narration into a real romance. As it is, I must observe that M. Agricole—who has, indeed, admitted as much to me—was placed, by this conduct of his father, under a heavy moral obligation to go manfully through his studies, and fit himself, as soon as possible, to pass into an independent position, and support himself by his own labour. Every franc that he spent represented some privation which his family was undergoing for his sake; and his conscience would have been more at ease in after years had he always kept his expenses pretty nearly within the limits of necessity. On the other hand, what can be more dangerous and reprehensible than this system of congregating in one capital city the pick of all the youths of the country, at an age when temptation is so strong, and under circumstances in which temptation cannot be yielded to without a certain amount of dishonesty? I rejoice at the great division of property in France, at the immense number of small fortunes which it has created; but it is a recognised rule of conduct, that those who possess little must not ape the manners and emulate the expenses of those who have much. From certain external causes, this equalisation of fortune has not produced its natural effect, and exists unaccompanied by unambi-

tious tastes and simple manners, or is associated with black ignorance and stupid undevelopment. The youth who can scarcely afford a clean shirt twice a-week are tormented by ideas of costly pleasures, and kept constantly on the rack by ambition. There is no adaptation at all of desires to possibility. Every soldier, it is said, carries a marshal's bâton in his knapsack; every civilian cherishes dreams of luxury, in which fine clothes, a carriage, a splendid apartment, rich dinners, generous wines, and purchased smiles, are mingled in rare kaleidoscopic confusion. It is to be enabled to realise these visions that the French youth desire knowledge. Their parents, with narrower ambition, are scarcely more reasonable. They have read and heard of model young men who have studied for years in poverty on bread and water, until their minds have been made opulent with ideas of exchangeable value, and all imagine that their son—who is, perhaps, wilful, lazy, gluttonous, luxurious, vain, or simple—will emulate so good an example, provided only he be placed in a position of artificial poverty. Many fathers who could afford a handsome allowance purposely send their children to struggle with the world on an income which a clerk, experienced in want and broken to privation, scarcely finds sufficient. The theory may be good, but the result is deplorable. Virtue is no common thing. Fifty stumble for one that keeps upright. However,

in most cases, the sordid condition in which students are placed arises from the poverty of the parents, who will not keep them to follow the plough, and are proud of their craving for glory, distinction, and the pleasures thereon attendant. The State, however, after all, is chiefly to blame, for it holds out unreasonable prospects of employment. Every tenth man in France is a soldier or a functionary.

Agricole, as I have said, was allowed a thousand francs a-year: many young students begin their career with less. Honour to them if they obey a genuine impulse, and courageously go on to the end—not faultless, who can ask that?—but without very serious wandering from the path of duty—without wasting many precious years and irredeemable opportunities—above all, without allowing their souls to narrow to their circumstances in the struggle with want. My friend Agricole never pretended to be a model; but, on the contrary, put himself forward as a warning. He would not, perhaps, have done so, had his errors been any more than those which are often leniently described as "the follies of youth," whilst, in truth, they are positively criminal, though not enumerated in any code.

I see a mark of sceptical interrogation on the face of my reader. How can a young man, obliged to maintain a genteel appearance, to buy books, to pay

for classes, be expected to do all this with forty pounds a-year, or less? He *is* expected to do it; and when nature has formed him for a student—when he is impelled by love of knowledge, or even reasonable ambition, instead of being inflated by a boundless aspiration for infinite enjoyment—he sometimes does so successfully.

But in sketching the career of M. Agricole, these matters will be explained better than in any other way. He had already attained the degree of Bachelor in a provincial college, and was sent up to Paris, ostensibly to study the law. He was then twenty years of age, or nearly so—filled with hope and ambition, and passably innocent of what is called knowledge of the world—which means, the experience people get by doing wrong and suffering for it. He confessed, however, or invented, certain little affairs of the heart, in which a farmer's daughter and a widow played the principal figure. Most young Frenchmen have a budget of this kind of adventures to tell, generally of so disgraceful a nature that I try to believe they are lying, which is no doubt often the case. Every one has been the hero of some half-dozen seductions, all of elegant and beautiful women. I listen in silence, or profess my incompetence to deal with this subject; because M. de Balzac, who is considered by French youth to have unlocked the last cabinet of human nature—to

know everything about it—informs me, in the course of his proof, that it is impossible for any respectable Frenchwoman to remain virtuous—that there are about two hundred thousand ladies, by their position and manners, worth seducing in France, and a million men capable of seducing them. Five to one, and each of those five has had at least six "successes!" I refrain from drawing the conclusion of these stupendous statistics.

Agricole was rather more moderate than the majority, and only boasted of two intrigues before he was twenty. I can hardly say boasted, however, for he admitted the fact in a tone that made me suppose he feared that I should despise him if I thought, as I really do, that when he came to Paris he was fresh from his mother's side, and knew nothing of intrigue but what he had read in the books which had heated his fancy, and given him the power of acquiring, or seeming to acquire, knowledge that had made his friends, and even his masters, cry out that it would be a shame to stifle such a genius in the country. The first developements of passion have often been mistaken for symptoms of genius.

On arriving in Paris, M. Agricole, full of the most stoical intentions, sought for a room on the sixth or seventh story: he would have preferred an eighth if it could have been got. He was unsuccessful for some time, and remained at an hôtel,

where he spent seven or eight francs a-day. At length, roused by the frightfully rapid diminution of his funds, he thought it best to make up his mind to take a back-room on the fourth story in the Rue St. Bénoit. He might have gone higher; but really the "holes" into which he was shown had no resemblance whatever to the garrets, not described, but illuminated, in the songs of Béranger. He did not yet know that those dingy places were made poetical by love, and, above all, by memory. He looked for a "*mansarde fraichement decorée*," a theatrical garret, and was shocked by dust and cobwebs. But who ever enjoyed the delights of poverty that deliberately condemned himself to them? Besides, poverty has in reality no delights; it has only compensations — compensations justly refused to the amateur sufferer. We may remember the time when fire was a luxury, and when we have paused to see the bright flames leap up, as it were, against the window-panes above, in the darkness of the inhospitable street, where the rain was sloping before the wind. The moment seems a pleasant one now, because the bitter feeling is gone; but would it not have been simply ridiculous if we had put out our fire in order to have the pleasure of romantically blowing upon our fingers?

Not being able to stomach a cabinet six feet square, across which even a decrepit flea might have

leaped, Agricole went lower down and occupied a large, though bare-looking, room on the fourth story. I have never seen more than the window of it; but as we passed through the passage Ste. Marie late at night, on our way home from some friend's house, he used to stop me, and, pointing up, say regularly in the same tone: "That's where I lived when I first knew Fifine." "Indeed!" I would exclaim. Whereupon, with but slight immaterial variations, he would tell me his story nearly to the end, and then break off, saying, "I have told you this fifty times before." He had, but he knew so all along, and only shrank from relating the catastrophe.

He often promised me to write a regular account of his life, as materials for use; and, indeed, began to do so. Circumstances prevented him from going on, which is not to be regretted; for, however vivid a talker he might be, he was a detestable penman. His style was as dry as if he had really drenched his mind with legal knowledge. Besides, he never sat down to his desk until he had read several chapters of Rousseau's "Confessions;" and here and there in his pages I found whole fragments stolen bodily, and transported to the midst of his own queer diction. What was worse still, he so altered and distorted his facts, in order, as he thought, to embellish them and make himself interesting, that I

scarcely recognised them. I therefore prefer giving an incomplete account, that shall be conformable to truth, especially as I have not promised any narrative at all of this kind, but profess merely to throw down some desultory observations on manners.

The story of Fifine shall come in further on, if I can find room for it. To introduce it here would be beside my purpose, for I am going to be very severe and serious if I can, and must not relapse into sentiment. Fifine, briefly, was what the writers of fiction and comic operas call a grisette — a thing that sews on buttons, lives on salad, is a prodigy of fidelity and bad spelling, and contrives to be always fresh-looking and smartly dressed. Fifine was the ray of sunshine which makes a palace of a garret — exactly what Agricole expected to find up-stairs, and what he would not have found if he had gone there. It would have been, perhaps, better if he had not.

Medical students are allowed to live in furnished lodgings, or where they please, but law-students are required to have furniture of their own. Agricole, therefore, was compelled to buy a bedstead and some other necessary articles, which, with his extra expenses in the preliminary hôtel, materially reduced the capital with which he had set out from Poitiers. His mother had added a sum from her own private savings, to enable him to buy books and shirts withal; but he soon found that it was quite possible

to get on without either of these things. Poor students have made the discovery before. He was much more concerned to learn how he could make the two ends of the year meet on his slight pittance without compromising his dignity, or offending his stomach by resorting to inferior eating-houses. The first day after his installation in his new lodging he went out with desperately economical intentions; but he looked into several places, and saw that all the table-cloths were dirty. He had plenty of time before him to find out the proper quarters; so he went to a restaurant at forty sous, and took a cup of coffee afterwards—two francs and a-half in all. Then he calculated, that at this rate his dinners alone would swallow up his entire revenue. Decidedly that day could never be taken as a model—it was a day apart—no precedent: on the strength of which observation he went into the pit of the "Varieties."

It was not long before Agricole settled down into the routine of a poor student, and chalked out for himself a plan of life, which he ought to have kept to. I shall give a statement, checked both by my own experience and that of others, of the expenses which he was necessitated to make. His rent was 150 francs (6*l.*) per annum; his dinner came to 1 franc a-day, 365 francs a-year (say, 14*l.* 10*s.*); his breakfast to five sous a-day, or under 4*l.*; his washing was almost

nothing at first, for he did most of it himself. It was therefore possible for him to live on 24*l.* sterling; he had 6*l.* left for firing, candles, and petty expenses, and 10*l.* for the necessary outlay connected with his legal education. This existence was, of course, very mean, very insufficient, and allowed of no renovations of his wardrobe. But others have passed through greater difficulties; and I have heard of one instance in which a genuine student, for more than a year, made only one regular meal every other day, satisfying himself with two sous worth of bread on the intervening day. As I write these trivial details, and reflect on the sufferings they must represent, I begin to look more leniently on the conduct of many of these young men who, dealing every day with great ideas—ideas of poetry and luxury—are insensibly led to abandon their Spartan mode of life, to contract debts with the hope of payment, not considering that their parents must be the sufferers, and then by degrees to enter upon a kind of war with society.

Perhaps what I am going to say may only show my want of experience in London; but it seems to me that, though there is a great deal of squalid misery apparent, a great deal of genteel misery carefully concealed, in our capital, we do not know, as a class, what I shall call the Poor Bachelor of Paris. That strange being is the production of a very peculiar state of society, in which contempt of industry,

left as a destructive legacy by the old noblesse, and unconsciously propagated by romance and the drama, is found in curious alliance with many democratic features of manners. The Poor Bachelor is innately indolent, not with the indolence of the English sluggard, who lies a-bed to mid-day, and then remains at home with slippers on his feet and a yawn at his mouth, but with a sort of cultivated, elegant indolence, that very much resembles philosophy. You cannot condole with him on his poverty, because he makes a boast of it. He *has* nothing, but he desires nothing. Man is a ray of sunshine, that is gone when it has shone; the path of life is rugged, let us strew it with flowers; we can die but once, and it is better to die with white hands and rosy finger-nails than with horny palms! These and a thousand other such remarks make up the doctrine of the Poor Bachelor. He repels, however, the accusation of idleness. He is up betimes in the morning, and has walked three times round the garden of the Palais Royal before many business people have opened their eyes. He punctually reads every line of some favourite journal. He is a useful part of the social machinery, because he carries about little scraps of news from one place to another, as sparrows do bits of stick. He calls on all his friends at regular intervals, and is the ornament of some family circle.

The resources which the Poor Bachelor has at his

disposal are, of course, various; but he rarely has more than a thousand francs a-year, because if he had he would belong to another category. Monsieur F—— is the extremest case I know of. He has precisely 500 francs, or 20*l.* a-year—the produce of a small capital placed at good interest in one of the ready-made clothes houses, where, I suspect—on this point he is impenetrably discreet—he was once a clerk. I could point out the house in which he lives, but have never been asked up-stairs; for it is one of the first rules of conduct in this class not to be at home, except in some coffee-house at certain hours of the day. Their room is "a nest," as they call it, to sleep in. F—— tells me, that more than twenty years ago he was fortunate enough to find a *mansarde* for sixty francs a-year. He has remained in it ever since, and his landlord has refrained from raising his rent on the tacit understanding that his tenant shall play a game of dominoes with him every Sunday after dinner. For this reason the bachelor is missed at his post in the café of the Rue du Bouloi every seventh evening, and every Monday is exposed to the satirical remarks of his cronies, who pretend to imagine that he observes the Sabbath!

But how is it possible for even an old gentleman to be always dressed in garments not very threadbare, to appear occasionally in a new hat, to have his silver snuff-box replenished every morning, and to show a

rosy and invariably smiling face, on 20*l.* a-year, or 17*l.* 12*s.* rent deducted? M. F——'s own account of the matter, which he gave me one day that we were alone at the café, is as follows: "When I have taken my little turn round the garden I slip into a by-street, where there is a baker who invariably has my sou loaf ready in a corner. With this I go to the *crémerie,* or milk-shop, and ask for five centimes' worth of milk, which I dilute with water, and drink as I eat my bread, and talk to the mistress of the place about twenty years ago, when she was a morsel for a king and I—— But let that pass. [This was said with a very eloquent smile.] Your young stomach would not be satisfied with this; but I am then armed for the day. I feel light and cheerful; and as the afternoon advances, begin to look forward to the great affair—the important occupation of dinner. That meal is my delight. I spare no expense. Let those who know nothing be attracted by the gilded salons of the Palais Royal, and help to pay their extravagant rents. Thirty-two sous—two francs for a dinner! It is monstrous; and what a dinner! *I* go back to my *crémerie,* where I have long had the privilege [another smile] of dining. The good woman gives me a bowl of soup or plate of beef, and another of roast meat, or stewed meat, or vegetables, with fruit or cheese for dessert—all for sixteen sous. Do not imagine that I am at all favoured in the price;

there are three other customers equally well treated: but I flatter myself that my portions are a little more copious; and yet the *crémière* makes a fair profit. In this way, you see, the two great expenses of the day are provided for; and I have 109 francs left. Now I see by your face," continued the old gentleman, crossing his legs and stirring about a piece of sugar in a glass of water, "that you are counting up that this leaves me only about six sous a-day for washing, tobacco, coffee expenses, &c. I must, therefore, reveal to you the great secret of philosophical life in Paris. My little talents of society have procured me friends, who invite me to dinner on an average once a-week; I have some relations, to whom I go one other day; and—I am very lucky at dominoes."

I had already noticed that M. F—— almost always rose a winner, and this admission led me to study more narrowly the manners both of himself and his class. With few exceptions, it appeared that, instead of philosophically reducing their expenses to their limited incomes, they sometimes directed the activity of mind, which they declined to use in legitimate occupations, to gaining easy victories at cards or dominoes over less experienced players. To a certain extent, therefore, they become confounded with the individuals of whom I shall have presently to speak —the Parasites of the Coffee-houses.

Many Poor Bachelors, less methodical than my friend F——, adopt the plan of lying in bed one day and taking a tolerably good dinner the next. There seem to be wonderful charms in this vegetable kind of life. An instance is mentioned of a man who worked like a horse for the first six months of the year, in order to be able to do nothing during the remaining months. All these people deny that they are mentally diseased, are quite ready to discuss their own conduct, and pose you sometimes with the questions, "What is the object of life? Is it to work, or is it to be enabled to enjoy the results of work?" They maintain that their condition, if not one of perfect happiness, is at least nearer happiness than that of those poor rich men who, whilst trembling on the borders of the grave, are still anxious about their prospects, and will not cease from labour for fear of want in the future. There is some truth in this, if there can be any truth in selfishness. M. F—— looks upon the whole world as a medium in which his enjoyments are to take place. Whether he has any suspicion of anything beyond, I know not. If we may believe what he says, he "jumps the life to come," and sees no difference between his own destiny and that of a dog. However, he has some superstitions:—attributed an accident on board a steamer from St. Cloud to the presence of a priest; trembles if salt be upset on the table-cloth; will not give or

receive a knife as a present; and is indignant with the clergy who refuse the offices of the Church to the impenitent dead!

It may easily be imagined that the Poor Bachelor is an uncompromising supporter of the existing order of things; I mean of any order of things whilst it exists, except perhaps the Republic, which stirs too many questions, makes too much noise, and leads to financial embarrassments. The Poor Bachelor lends a willing ear to reports of "spoliation," and trembles for the safety of his capital. All *émeutes*, therefore, find in him a pitiless judge. There is blood in his eye when he talks of the necessity of repression; and the excellent man would sacrifice the inhabitants of a whole quarter, rather than be disturbed in his daily habits. When mobs come brawling down the street, he goes out and cries "*Vive*" the man or thing popular for the time being, telling his friends who remonstrate with him that it is necessary to curry to the rabble, whose victory he always thinks to be near at hand; but he makes up for this base condescension by shaking his cane at the rioters under cover of the window-curtains when their shouts are dying away in the distance. At the *coup d'état* he execrated Louis Napoleon as long as the victory seemed doubtful, but now he speaks of him with tearful enthusiasm, and, forgetting the spicy stories he used to tell about Strasbourg and Boulogne, vows that he

has faithfully preserved the traditions of the Empire. One day a friend reminded him of some dangerous pleasantries of which he had formerly been guilty; his hands trembled, his face turned pale, and he said hurriedly, "I don't want to go to Cayenne. Another such allusion, and this café never sees me more!" The fact is, the Poor Bachelor has no political convictions whatever. Let those among the more comfortable who have, blame him. He seems to me the type of the Conservative citizen. Were there not a vast number of such respectable nullities, how should we account for the circumstance, that everything that gets power is immediately exalted into a demigod by a crowd of persons whose position in life is not changed, who have run no danger and can form no hopes, and whose throats are still hoarse with applauding the Government that has fallen? The Poor Bachelor voted for Lamartine, voted for Cavaignac, voted for the Party of Order, and voted "Yes" in 1851. No successful adventurer, no patriot, no usurper—no Washington, no Robespierre —need despair of receiving his support after he has got into place; but, as cynical M. Croquignole observes, if the angel Gabriel were to ask for his vote and influence before that indispensable act, he would be received with insult, and looked upon as a Socialist or a robber.

M. Croquignole is another kind of old bachelor

— more comfortable, and less respectable. He is equally without convictions, philosophical or religious; but, in addition, he has most frightful theories of morals, or, rather, most deplorable opinions of human nature. F——, as he says, respects something, believes in the possibility of female virtue; though when he was young—— but discretion characterises a gallant man. M. Croquignole believes in nothing: all men are rogues; all women frail. He is a sort of Vautrin in words; and readers of Balzac are enabled to perceive in what way that kind of writer exerts an influence. They give a vocabulary to those who already agree with them, but have not the wit to express their corrupt ideas. M. Croquignole is a very stupid old gentleman; but, by constant practice, he has acquired the art of enunciating his deplorable theories with great effect. A young man brought into his society must either despise or follow his theories. One evening spent in his company is more pernicious than the perusal of fifty bad books. Evil doctrines in print bewilder more than they seduce; but the case is otherwise when those doctrines are spoken by a real man of flesh and blood, a grey-haired being, respectably dressed, to the applause of a select society, with comic gestures and glistening eyes. M. Croquignole and his fellows—a large class in Paris—are influential in forming public opinion. Nothing pleases half-educated young men so much as to gather from

these trumpery philosophers what they look upon as maxims of "life." We are all more apt to anticipate the vices than the wisdom of age.

M. Croquignole leads a different kind of life from M. F——. No one knows the amount or origin of his income. He has a room in an hôtel near the Rue Montmartre; and pays a fixed sum for his breakfast and dinner, which he takes at a kind of private table d'hôte held in the house—fifty sous, I believe, for the two. According to his own admission, most of his fellow-lodgers are scamps; but are not all men so? The landlord has recently escaped from prison, where he was put under the accusation of perjury—of substituting himself for hire to some idle students, and passing examinations for them. He was known as Monsieur, which means the person who generally lives with Madame, the real head of the establishment, who, if we may believe her scandalous lodger, had formerly, &c. &c. I frequently went to the house to see a Fifth-year Student, who had made the Quartier Latin too hot to hold him. Each time I heard of some tremendous scene that had taken place. The lady on the first floor in the court had attacked the gentleman who lived on the opposite side of the passage, because the lady who lived on the second floor had won his good graces. There had been bloodshed and breaking of furniture. Then M. ——, "the man with the red beard," with

whom I had smoked a pipe, had turned out to be a robber, and had gone off with a variety of watches. After that, the lady who lived on the first-floor front had been arrested on a terrible accusation. "My dear ——," said I to my friend, who seemed half inclined to stop in the house in order "to study life," "let M. Croquignole remain in the world that illustrates his theories. It has already injured you sufficiently, when it has brought you to call this sort of thing *life*." Almost by common consent, indeed, that phrase, "seeing life," means mixing in discreditable scenes. A better education would be to place one's self where only ideas of greatness and goodness could be introduced. The mind is chameleon-like in one respect—it receives hues from without. But it is unlike in another respect, for it retains them. The colour of my mind now is derived from thirty years of impressions. Will it remain the same in thirty more?

CHAPTER XIII.

Café of the Rue du Bouloi—Cafés in general—Their Economy and Appearance—Waiters—Cockneys abroad again—English and French Soldiers—Furniture of Cafés—Articles consumed—Habits of Customers—Beer—Sobriety of the French—Instances and Exceptions—Population of the Banlieue—A ferocious Pastry-woman—Political Workmen—Drunkards' Association—Domino Players—Four ditto Gentlemen—The Café de la Régence—Parasites of the Cafés—Their Habits and Character—Billiard-playing—La Poule—Cards—The Point of Honour—Gambling—Playhouses—Their Restoration plotted—Frail Health of Morality—How to Demoralise a People—Acquaintances in public Places—Police Agents—Informers—Conspiring Spies—The Singing Coffee-houses—Applause forbidden—The Students disobey—Delphine—Songs sung—National Airs suppressed.

I WENT first to the café of the Rue du Bouloi in company with Agricole Passager, who, like the student above-mentioned, had thought it wise for a time to avoid his old haunts. There I observed many new traits. The regular customers were totally different from those who frequent the cafés in the Quartier Latin. I shall endeavour, from the result of all my experience, to give an idea of this

kind of life under its general aspects, and then return to the students.

There are many cafés on the Boulevards and in the principal streets, which form the lounges of the fashionable and attract especially the attention of strangers. They are elegantly fitted-up establishments, quite unlike anything we have in England. Purssell's gives no idea at all, either of their ornaments or of the way in which customers are served. In the principal room, behind a handsome mahogany counter adorned with vases of flowers, on a raised seat, with her back to a large mirror, sits the mistress of the place, or of its owner, or simply a young woman hired to look beautiful there. An Algerine gained a good deal of money by showing his wife and sisters in their native costume in this manner. The counter-lady is politely saluted by all who enter, and some old gentlemen make a point of paying directly to her, in order to have the opportunity of disposing of a little compliment. There is an urn upon the counter, into which all contributions for the waiters are dropped, either by themselves or by the customers. A division is made every week, according to some rule agreed upon. Waiters often purchase their places, and generally make a good thing of them. An able writer has remarked on the injurious effect of the employment of so many thousands of young, active men, in duties most of which would

be much better and much more gracefully performed by women; and maintains that many girls are driven to vice by the effect of this competition. The criticism, however, applies with more force to the employment of shop-boys, for the labours of a waiter at a café are very severe. They are constantly running rapidly about. It is customary to give one or two sous, according to the amount spent; and it is a point of politeness, at which Cockney giggles immensely, not to put this contribution into the waiter's hand, but to place it on a tray. To thrust a sou into a man's palm in Paris is considered offensive, as also to "chuck" down money upon a counter, whether in cafés or in shops, in the off-hand style of our verdant youth. My stout friend ——, passing along the Rue St. Honoré, observed a piece of money on the pavement, and with really good-humoured intentions, but in an insufferably patronising manner, touched a workman on the shoulder with his cane, pointed to it, and went on. The workman, who might otherwise have appropriated the treasure-trove, was hurt in his dignity, responded by a glance of contempt, took up the piece, and dropped it into a tray in the mouth of a little pug-dog that came round the corner leading a blind beggar. It must be confessed that there is a much greater delicacy in pecuniary matters among the humble classes in Paris than in London; and,

though I detest the odious conduct of the French army of late, I must admit that I have never been stopped at night in the street by a soldier holding out his hand and asking for "twopence to get a pint of beer." It is true that the garrison of Paris in 1851 sold itself for a *petit verre.*

In all but the very meanest cafés, the seats, which run round the room, are stuffed or covered with red cloth or plush; handsome chairs are spread about; the tables are of marble; the walls are painted and gilded; brilliant chandeliers hang from the roof; and a stove adorned with brass-work occupies the centre. A regular café has a second room, or series of rooms, properly called the estaminet, where there are billiard-tables, and in which smoking is allowed. In second-rate establishments, the cigar, and even the pipe, are admitted everywhere.

The articles consumed in these cafés are various, but the commonest is, of course, that which gives its name to them. A cup of coffee is never heard of, except at breakfast, when it is taken with milk. The regular custom is to ask for half a cup, *une demie-tasse.* The waiter takes care that a good quantity of the black coffee shall flow over into the saucer, where it receives the name of a *bain de pied,* or foot-bath, without which the customer would consider himself defrauded. Some will tell you,

that this is in order that a certain pernicious oil that rises to the summit of the coffee may be carried away; but as all Frenchmen drink the foot-bath, the explanation is evidently a subterfuge. It is amusing to see Englishmen just arrived nudging one another, and pointing out "those fellows drinking their slops." Most persons take after their coffee, and some with it, a diminutive glass of brandy, called the *petit verre*. The whole, with a plentiful supply of sugar, costs from fivepence to sixpence. Some people sit for an hour, and only consume a glass of sugar and water; others take what they call a grog, or tumbler of water with a thimblefull of brandy. Ladies are treated to a class of drinks which may be included under the generic name of sherbets, or sorbets, from the Italian sorbetti; that is to say, syrup of red currants, barley, &c. Of late years there has been a great increase in the consumption of what is called beer, an odious drink, at from four to six sous a bottle, for which our familiar language supplies an appropriate name —"swankey." It is difficult to understand how human beings can imbibe this horrid liquid, which donkeys would turn from. However, there is a stronger kind of beer, of three different qualities, made at Lyons, Strasbourg, and Lille. Yet even this, though quite as dear, is far inferior to our ale. Porter may be said to be unknown in France;

the only attempt to manufacture it having resulted in the production of some stuff like liquorice-water.

The consumption both of beer and brandy has lately increased more rapidly than that of wine, which gives occasion to some writers on social statistics to answer the vulgar assertion that drunkenness is the cause of misery, and to say that misery is the cause of drunkenness; which seems more likely, as misery existed first. However this may be, it is certain that, though the French are still comparatively a sober nation, yet drunkenness is on the increase. Hazlitt once explained that the French do not get drunk often, because they do not wish ever "to be unlike themselves." It is fairer to say, that as a nation they abhor the bestial state to which drink reduces a man. They are, moreover, excessively careful of their health, and carry their precautions sometimes to a ridiculous degree. When they do infringe, as might be expected they go to excess. In some manufacturing towns there are workmen who spend four days out of the week in drinking. At Nantes there are cabarets where people are allowed to drink wine at so much an hour. Of late, the prefects of the departments have been carrying on a regular war against the cafés and the cabarets, because workmen used to collect there and discuss politics. If we might believe the statements in their proclamations, half the popu-

lation spend the greater part of their time in drinking establishments. An order has just been issued forbidding schoolmasters to take their meals at cabarets. It would be wrong, however, to derive our ideas of the state of France from documents of this kind, which there is too much reason to believe are intended to cover persecutions against victuallers, who agree with their customers in not admiring the present form of government. The truth is, that the French as a nation are not drunkards. At any rate, most classes in Paris are remarkable the other way. If you meet, late at night, a fellow rolling to and fro, and shouting "*Vive l'Empereur,*" he is generally from the banlieue, or quarters outside the barriers.

I find that I am too much disposed to imitate the French, and speak of the habits of the capital as those of the country. The population round Paris is, perhaps, without exception, the most brutal and degraded in any country in the world. It seems to be in a perpetual state of *muzziness* from the influence of *petits verres,* which accounts for its thick-voiced enthusiasm in favour of the sword against law. It hates the Parisians, besides, because they are better dressed, and sometimes trespass on their orchards and strawberry-fields. When the insurrection of June was defeated, and the fugitives took refuge in the country, the peasantry turned out

and hunted them down like wild beasts, killing them in ditches and in woods without mercy. The same ferocious character is in part shared by the inhabitants of the smaller towns. I was once in a pastrycook's shop at St. Cloud. A young man, heavy-headed with drink, began to relate, with various chuckles, how he and some companions had taken a prisoner in an insurrection, how they determined to shoot him, how he implored for mercy and wept; but in vain. "*Ah! comme ça a dû être dróle.*"—"How funny it must have been!" cried the mistress of the establishment, clapping her hands with delight, and laughing loudly.

This, however, is a digression. I was going to say, that the workmen who mix in politics, who organise insurrectional committees, and who periodically get decimated at the barricades, are, unfortunately, in ordinary circumstances, the most quiet in Paris, perhaps in the world. They are fanatically attached to the idea of progress. A characteristic anecdote was told me the other day. A workman having occasion to call upon a friend of mine was invited by him to *trinquer,* equivalent to our expression "take something." The offer was declined, on the plea that that custom belonged to the old world, but that now workmen were obliged to show that they belonged to a new order of things. He then alluded to the Drunkards'

Association, which he had heard had been formed by members of the wealthy classes, in order to meet and indulge in this vice in company; but he was not quite sure of its existence. I am unaware whether it has been dissolved; but I have seen in the writings of some medical man, that he had often been called in to save members of this Association from the consequences of their orgies.

I am running away from the cafés, however. They are frequented in part by chance-passengers, in part by people who live in the neighbourhood, and, having no society at home, or none that pleases them, take this method of spending their leisure hours. I know a café in which four people have met regularly every evening, for about twelve years, to play their game of dominoes. If one is a few minutes behindhand, the others cannot conceal their uneasiness, and keep constantly looking towards the door. They almost always occupy the same table, and, indeed, are quite unhappy if when they arrive they find their places taken. My attention was drawn to them by a request, made very politely, that I would remove to make way for them. They evidently waited for my answer with the greatest anxiety, and it was worth while being disturbed to receive their words and looks of gratitude. They seized on their places as if they had come into a fortune, and the dominoes at once rattled on the table.

The Café de la Régence, recently demolished, was frequented almost exclusively by chess-players. They used to collect in the afternoon and in the evening, almost without missing a day. It was amusing to notice the solemnity with which they arranged the pieces, when they considered themselves about of equal strength, and the tone of affected commiseration or undisguised triumph assumed by the victor. I never saw keener and more expressive glances of delight than those which M. le Commandant cast at the bystanders when he was sure of his game. One observation I must make, however, which is characteristic of national character. An Englishman who offers to play is always received with great demonstrations of politeness, even with *maladroit* compliments; but, once the contest engaged, his antagonist amuses himself and the bye-standers by speaking with a slight imitation of our atrocious accent, still preserving a grave face, and laughing only with his eyes, whilst, in general, the victim is unconscious of what is going on, or does not choose to notice it.

I have already said that many old bachelors eke out their living by small gains at the games permitted in these places. There is, besides, a regular class, that may be called the Parasites of the Cafés, who make a living by insinuating themselves into the good graces of strangers, or young men just

beginning life. They are not by any means blacklegs. They render service for service, teaching the various games which a genteel person must be acquainted with—as piquet, impériale, rhams, dominoes, billiards, &c. They play sometimes for a little money, sometimes only for the articles consumed, and have the prudence, generally, to be tolerably moderate. They do not wish to gain much at one sitting, but, whilst paying for their expenses, to make or keep an acquaintance who will invite them to breakfast or to dinner in return for their politeness, who will take them to the theatre, or, perhaps, if very flush of money, make them a present of a ring, or some other trifling article which a man of honour may accept. They are generally well-dressed, affable men, supplied with anecdotes and witticisms. When they fall in with a wealthy Englishman anxious to be initiated into the mysteries of Paris, they often put aside their scruples, and, like the disciples of Mohammed, seem to think it lawful to prey upon the infidel. It is true that our countrymen, who believe that the moral principle is little developed in people who wear hair about their faces, sometimes require services in their turn which it is the custom to pay for.

Perhaps the favourite game in France is billiards. The frequenters of the cafés are very expert at it, and often risk large sums of money. I know

of a common gardener who has earned quite a fortune by his skill, and now lives near Meudon like a gentleman. The French game is entirely one of cannons. All new tables are without pockets; and the old-fashioned ones have been sent into the country. There is scarcely a village in the provinces without its table, round which collect most of the young men who have any money to spend on Sunday.

There is a game called La Poule, played on the old billiard-tables in the cafés, in which the balls increase in value as they decrease in number. A cautious player may almost gain his living by joining in this game. He buys a ball for five sous. His object is not to win, but to avoid losing until bolder players, who are seeking only for amusement, have been driven out of the field. He keeps his ball up against the cushion, until there are only two or three competitors left. He then affects to be tired, admits his want of skill, is certain that he shall lose, and some bold player is always found to buy his chance of winning the whole "poule" for two, three, or four francs. Agricole has admitted to me that, for weeks together, in certain dark moments of his life, he has kept off starvation in this way.

Everybody plays at cards in France, from the marquis down to the porter and the chiffonnier. In

this case, as in so many others, the people take their manners and ideas from the upper classes. The point of honour is strictly adhered to by the *canaille;* and the poorest gambler in the poorest cabaret pays his play-debts, whilst his grocer is lying in wait for him with a bill at the corner of the street, and the greengrocer's wife is sitting with fierce impatience in his porter's lodge. All gambling games are forbidden, and a war is carried on against houses in which unfashionable people collect to imitate their superiors. Formerly, when the friends of divine right were in power, the police used to grant permission to a certain number of ladies of quality to keep gambling-houses; and some of them are said to have made as much as twenty thousand francs a-year in this way. Gambling-clubs are still tolerated in Paris, under the name of Circles. After the 2nd of December, whatever the government papers may now say, it was seriously contemplated to reopen public gambling-houses, and many old gentlemen were quite enthusiastic in their anticipated gratitude. Paris would be once more something like what it was in their youth. I admit that it was this plan, more than the vigorous manner in which the liberties of France, already strangely compromised, were overthrown, that first gave me a high opinion of the political abilities of Louis Napoleon. It was impossible to show more sagacity, more perfect appreciation of the

necessities of despotism. If this able man allowed himself to be over-persuaded to refrain from his purpose, it was perhaps from the reflection that the country was already sufficiently demoralised by the policy pursued under the Presidency. Morality is a thing of very delicate health. It is easy to destroy it by example and precept. What undeniable warrant for falsehood, for hypocrisy, for desertion of opinion and principle, was afforded by the conduct of the Constitutional parties in the National Assembly! It was a singular and painful spectacle to behold every victorious party in France in turn become jesuitical. Day after day the papers that made the greatest outcry about the sinfulness of their antagonists, contained ingenious pleadings upon this theme: rules of right must give way to necessity. The public mind was prepared, by audacious sophisms, to look upon perjury as nothing. It is really disgraceful to hear men who had sworn to defend the Republic, and perseveringly conspired against it, now reproach the Imperial Dictator with the violation of his oath. The Orleanists, who are the most virulent, are expiating a whole career of immorality. The ineffaceable stigma of public contempt is affixed to every one of them. M. Odillon Barrot, who is sulking in some retired place, voted when a member of the Majority for the principle of retro-active legislation, which he had always con-

demned in opposition; and it must not be forgotten that M. de Broglie, cited as the model man of his party, once, to please a king, developed the doctrine of moral complicity, by which a man, whose writings *an assassin had read,* was condemned as an accomplice! It is needless, however, to enumerate examples to show that the project of the new Government to demoralise the people by means of gambling-houses would have been an excess of precaution; because the very fact that it did not fall at once with a brand upon its forehead proves that the good work was pretty well done to its hand.

In all countries it is always wise to abstain, as a rule, from making acquaintances in public places. In France this rule should be most strictly observed, for however respectable a casual neighbour may appear, there is always a chance of his proving to be a thief, a policeman, or a spy. It is equally dangerous to meet either of the three. The thief will pick your pocket or lure you into gambling. The police agent has always a bunch of moral false keys, by which to get at your political opinions, and he will lure you into a conspiracy if he can. The art of provoking men to commit crimes in order to have the pleasure of punishing them, is carried to a very high degree of perfection in France; but the public, having been put on its guard, is not in such great danger as might at first sight appear. I remember

that one of our Whig statesmen, who has always borne the reputation of a political puritan, once made it a boast that he had never, after the fashion of the Tories, employed informers to excite conspiracies; and this boast was probably taken as a pledge that he would never do so. On the first occasion, however, in which there was anything like a political conspiracy in England whilst that statesman was in power, there was a police agent sent amongst the misguided men who wanted to get up a trashy imitation of the French revolution, and I believe it was clearly proved that the most violent suggestions came from him. Virtue is good policy, even if it only enables us now and then to use the weapons of dishonesty with greater effect. It is useful to refer to this circumstance, because it teaches us that governments which only represent certain classes have ever been, and are in all countries, the same in spirit, though they may be more or less checked by public opinion.

A workman once related to me the way in which a police agent tried to make an informer of him. He told him to go among a certain class and ascertain their opinions, and make a list of them, in order that, when necessary, their employers, supposed to belong to the democratic party, might know upon whom they could depend. The trap was too impudent to be successful. A little while after, this same

agent was seen exciting a number of Germans in a café to utter revolutionary opinions. It was at a time when the Government was endeavouring to drive away all foreign workmen from Paris, under pretence that they were dangerous to order, but really to satisfy the mean jealousies of a certain class whose votes might be useful. My friend whispered a warning to some, but when they wished to go away they found the doors already guarded by the police, and all were arrested.

Every place of public refreshment or amusement in Paris is under very strict police regulations. Throughout the city there are what are called Singing Coffee-houses, some of which are got up in a very expensive style. In summer, those most frequented are the open-air ones in the Champs Elysées and near other public promenades. That in the Rue Madame consists of a vast shed, covering a whole garden, which is filled with small tables and seats. The singers occupy an elevated platform brilliantly lighted, with a roof supported by gilded pillars. There is no charge for entrance, but everything is dearer than at ordinary cafés. A large board bears a singular inscription, to the effect that all noisy applause is forbidden by the police. The students and grisettes who frequent the place sometimes choose to disobey this order, and pretend, whilst the worst singers are performing, to be seized with enthusiastic

admiration. It is indeed rare that an evening passes without one or two being collared and turned out. The police find it difficult to select the ring-leaders on these occasions, but, as it is necessary to pitch upon somebody, generally choose the most inoffensive person present. I once saw a ferocious-looking alguazil rush upon a meek country visitor, who had evidently not noticed the announcement, but had imitated his waggish neighbours for fear of being thought wanting in musical appreciation. Despite his protestations, he was roughly ejected from the garden. The last time I was there, a celebrated young lady, named Delphine, kept crowing like a cock all the time; but when the police made towards her she turned up her face, looking so innocent and stolid, that they became convinced that the real culprit was her neighbour, a fat cookmaid, who was quietly discussing a bottle of beer and listening in ecstasies to the roulades of pretty Madame Piquet. Delphine has long been intimately known by all the students of that quarter.

Formerly, national and even republican songs used to be sung at these places; but at present, nothing is authorised but comic or sentimental pieces which have previously been carefully examined by the police. Indecent allusions and immoral sentiments are allowed in all places where the public appreciates them; as, for example, in the goguettes,

where the worst class of workmen congregate: but the slightest reference to liberty or national honour is carefully suppressed. The ingenuity of the police in finding or inventing dangerous allusions is remarkable, and must be taken as a great compliment to the French people. It seems to be imagined that their souls are ready to fire up at the contact of generous ideas. The other day, however, war being expected to break out, I was present when a scene from some opera was sung, in which the words "Aux armes" perpetually recurred. They attracted no notice, excited no enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XIV.

Further Account of M. Agricole—Poor Fifine—A Visit to Home—A prudent Girl—A renewed Acquaintance—The Crémerie—A charming Woman—Fifine comes upon the Stage—Her Conversation—A Knot of French People—Madame Adèle's Shop—A discreet Lady—The Neighbours—Talk of Butter and Cheese—Eggs—Stock of the Crémerie—Breakfasts—Fifine and Adèle—Philosophy of Females—Formation of a Club—Rules and Regulations—Alexis introduced—A New Candidate—M. Petit—A Mysterious Character—Our Manners—Watching a Rival—Tom Pouce—Ludicrous Simplicity—Blackballing a Beard—The Man who lives upon Crémières—I moralise—The Game of Consequences.

In entering into some further account of the doings of M. Agricole Passager—in order to illustrate the kind of life through which a student passes on his way to respectability—I suppose it is not necessary for me formally to express my disapproval of many things I shall have to relate, or to apologise for being lenient and even cheerful in speaking of certain actions which must be theoretically blamed. I would rather be accused of laxity than excessive bitterness, and there is nothing so offensive to me,

and to many better men, as the ferocious spirit of condemnation, the tendency to judge, and judge severely, which I find in persons whose chief virtue is gentility, and who would be much at a loss, if called upon, to show a warrant for their harshness. There are some matters, it is true, so obviously blameable that we can indulge in the luxury of abuse without danger; and when I come to them, I let off the steam at my ease; but I cannot think any amiable or estimable who, when they are made better acquainted with Fifine, and know a little about her trials and her position, and the bravery with which she held up her head and picked her way through the slush of life, not caring how much of her pretty ankle she showed—I am not at all anxious about the opinion of those, I say, who do not give her at least two tears for one frown.

I have already said that I cannot bring together more than a few scattered materials for the life of my friend Agricole, who could speak the truth and not write it—for he wanted Art. What I am now going to say is nearly as much my story as his; and the great egotistical *I* will be of constant occurrence. This cannot be helped. Besides, there is perhaps no better way of describing the state of French society than by narrating a few of the scenes in which I have mixed; carefully avoiding, however, to make myself in any way a hero. If I chose—— but

this is an unpardonable insinuation; and I beg the reader to consider that nothing has ever happened to me at all.

Agricole spent his time after the fashion of many students of the fourth and fifth year. He did not absolutely neglect his lectures, but had several times been rebuffed at examinations. Even when I had known him but a short time, it seemed probable to me that he would continue all his life as a student, and that, like Lucian's Hermotimus, he would be no wiser at the end than at the beginning. His relations with poor Fifine, though in part beneficial, were in their general results disastrous. Some of his friends thought she was merely an acquaintance, whilst others meeting them jogging along the streets arm-in-arm, or wandering out in country places, began to look upon her almost as his wife. There was a time when he meant to propose marriage—at least he said so—but there was the opposition of his parents to fear. As may be supposed, after a year or two M. and Madame Passager had heard sad stories of their son, and uncomfortable confessions from himself. Once he had been compelled to vanish from Paris, and retire, as he expressed it, "into the bosom of his family." The storm blew over, however, and although some small employment was offered to him at Poitiers, the general attractions of the capital and some melancholy letters from Fifine,

who said that, in spite of her efforts, she could not "suffice for her maintenance," and "might be obliged to forget him who was forgetting her," induced him to return.

The greater part of his debts he had "consolidated"—that is, in his vocabulary, he had compelled his chief creditors to give up all hope of getting their money:—the rest he had paid or compounded for. His father, who had inherited some property, was enabled to fit him out again; and he arrived a second time in the capital, instantly bought a silk gown for Fifine, took her to the theatre or the ball every evening in the week, treated her to sumptuous breakfasts, and, of course, gave festive entertainments to his friends. Fifine, however, might, to a certain extent, be regarded as his good angel. She checked, instead of encouraging, his extravagance, and by a variety of little manœuvres, well known to female diplomatists, contrived at last to obtain the control of his purse. Friends of her own sex said that her prudence was egotism, that she wanted to insure her own prospects, and ironically foretold that she would one day have goods "under the sun," as they expressed it. Be this as it may, after the expansion of extravagance which once more did him irreparable injury, Agricole found himself engaged in a conflict with a will much more powerful than his own and insensibly put himself under its guidance.

I had made his acquaintance long before this without knowing anything about Fifine, whose existence he at first kept a secret from his most intimate friends, who only began to suspect that he worshipped some goddess in secret on finding that he was scarcely ever at his room, and that once a letter for him remained forty-eight hours in the porter's lodge. It was not true, however, that he spent all this time with Fifine, who in those days industriously followed her occupation as *lingère*, and nearly supported herself by her own labour. Agricole knocked about sometimes at the public libraries in fits of industry; sometimes at various cafés, where he ran up scores, and then discovered that he was uncivilly treated. But this was during his first campaign. I renewed my relations with him under circumstances which led me to obtain a considerable insight into the manners, both of Parisian young men and of certain portions of the middle classes.

For some time I used to take my meals at the Palais Royal, or at a restaurant in the Passage des Panoramas, according as I chose to spend thirty-two sous or two francs for my dinner. One day, passing down a street not far from my house, I saw Agricole come out of a shop, with arms extended, to embrace me. We had not met since his return from the country, and of course I could not refuse to step in and share a *canette*, or bottle of good beer,

with him. The place was a *crémerie,* such as that at which M. F—— used to take his meals; and when I saw the mistress of the house, the idea at once struck me that there were other reasons besides economy to allure Agricole; for it was evident he was a regular customer. Madame Adèle—so let us call her—was about thirty years of age, very short and very stout, but with one of the finest heads I have ever seen—"a head to turn others," said Agricole. She was the very type of a Parisian brunette, with features of great regularity; eyes not very large, but of powerful expression; mouth exquisitely shaped, though the lips, being a trifle too thin, sometimes when she was off her guard gave her a sharp, vixenish, and even avaricious look. She had a good skin, small ears, and delicate hands; knew perfectly how to adapt her costume to her shape and her peculiar style of beauty; and possessed all the qualities necessary to make an impression on much less impressionable people than Agricole. I communicated my suspicions when Madame Adèle, after a gracious reception in the back-parlour, went to serve some customers; but he checked me rather hurriedly, saying, "Don't talk in that way before Fifine. I assure you I have no intentions—you are perfectly at liberty to pay your court." I did not know then who Fifine was; but the words were scarcely out of his mouth when a small, lively girl,

with ordinary features, but healthy and pleasant-looking, came in, fluttering the pink ribbons of her cap, and talking loud, as if perfectly at home there. She put on a prim expression on seeing a stranger—made as if she would retire—but then, taking courage, appropriated a glass, and helped herself to some beer, on the plea that she was dying of thirst. I soon understood that this was Agricole's *ménagère* —a word of admirable vagueness; for it may mean anything, from a wife to a housekeeper.

The young girl had something to say, and could not keep it in before me. She had been to the theatre the night previously with Madame Chose, and had heard a speech that had gone to her heart. The heroine of the piece was a grisette, who boasted —with truth, said Fifine, her eyes sparkling—that she and her sisters took all the upper fruit—the fine strawberries and blooming peaches—from the basket of Love, leaving all the refuse to the genteel ladies. We did not appreciate the extreme beauty of this saying to the same degree as Fifine. Half the expressions that strike us in poetry and romance are indebted as much to some adventitious reason, some accidental application, as to their intrinsic excellence, for our admiration. The author of the claptrap drama which contained this remark would have been content with the praises lavished on his genius in that back-shop. *There* was a man who could write;

he knew all about it. Fifine would have kissed him had he been present. Why? I could not exactly understand; for the poor girl would have indignantly resented any attempt to rank her among the grisettes, the pre-eminent success of whose charms she was so pleased to hear celebrated. Fifine made a just remark in speaking of the difference between the Grisette and the Lorette. The character of the latter was expressed by the anecdote of the well-known Madame D——, who, when a young man said to her, "I love you," replied, with an air of surprise, "You are, then, *very* rich!" The grisette, on the contrary, when asked if she loves a person, says, "No; he is ugly," or "Yes; he is handsome;" sometimes, "Yes; he is good." Hereupon she looked half-tenderly, half-impudently at Agricole, who, indeed, is not remarkable for beauty. *Apropos* of the play, we discussed a very difficult subject—whether, after a girl had "played tricks to her lover," it was honourable, under any circumstances, to take her back. We young men, in the pride and requirements of our virtue, of course said that it never was: and Fifine observed, that man often enjoyed one great pleasure, that of being forgiven; but that woman only knew how delightful it was to forgive. These things were not uttered in a solemn, sentimental tone, but half-seriously, half-playfully; and I could not help wondering to find

so much sense — ay, and so much good-feeling, too—on those—what shall I say?—those conventionally immoral lips.

However, I think I shall give a whole chapter to Fifine farther on, if I can make up my mind to do so without harshly condemning her on principles of which she never heard. My theme at present is different. I want to glance at the composition, the manœuvres, the diplomacy, the habits and modes of thought, the pains and pleasures, the virtues and the vices, of a little knot of French people, into the mystery of whose existence I penetrated to a great extent. My object in so doing is certainly to illustrate the manners of Paris; but it would be wrong to omit saying beforehand that, though the individuals I describe are not exceptions, neither are they types. The only inference that can fairly be drawn from a few examples must bear on the state of manners which renders them possible. It will be easy to separate what is personal from what is characteristic of classes. On the other hand, for many reasons, I am obliged to leave aside some frightful details of corruption.

Madame Adèle had not been long in that quarter. The shop had been previously occupied by a dirty family, who, under pretence of carrying on business, made it a resort of all the idle workmen of the place. One day it was closed, and a week after-

wards reopened, painted and decorated in a handsome style, with Madame Adèle behind the counter. Her appearance created quite a sensation in the neighbourhood. All the men admired, and all the women hated her, at once. When I began to inquire, my tailor said she was charming; and Madame Joseph, who had once gone marauding in that direction, assured me she was no better than she should be. Curiosity brought many customers to the shop, but prudence and jealousy kept away a great many more. The most annoying thing was, that nobody could learn whether Adèle was married or single—whether she had taken the business in her own name or in that of another—whether she was a person of proper or improper conduct. All questions met with evasive answers or silence—a case of great suspicion. He who conceals his affairs from the inquisitive must be a rogue. Tradesmen's wives, who had been "spoken of" for ten years past, turned up their noses at Adèle; even "legitimate mistresses" crushed her with their contempt. Not a single definite rumour got into circulation, but the whole female neighbourhood, by instinct, were led to believe that there was some disgraceful story hidden, and that a catastrophe would follow in due time.

A Parisian *crémerie* has scarcely any counterpart in London. It is sometimes quite an elegant

establishment, although the principal articles sold are milk, butter, cheese, and eggs. Common milk is tolerably cheap in Paris, but the best, improperly called cream, is dear. Butter, in ordinary years, varies according to quality from twenty-four to forty sous a-pound. There is an immense variety of cheeses, named from the towns and villages that produce them. Roquefort sells at twenty pence a-pound; Gruyère, at from sixteen to twenty sous; other kinds are not sold by weight, but so much a cheese. An immense controversy rages on this subject. The French say that English cheese is not worth eating, being salt and tasteless; whilst we set down the generality of French cheese as insipid. Madame Adèle used to treat me as Robinson Crusoe treated Friday when trying to make him eat salt, and insult a piece of "Cheshire" by practically declaring it uneatable. My friend —— looks upon the French as Atheistic, because they have not a perfect appreciation of Double Gloucester. All this arises from habit. For my part, Roquefort seems to me nearly as good as Stilton; and a Bondon or a Brie is better than ordinary Chedder. Eggs in Paris are dear, and often bad. When called "fresh," they are sometimes charged as much as twopence a-piece. They are eaten either *à la coque* or boiled, in which case the yolk is soaked up by

means of long strips of bread; or fried in butter on a tin-plate. Our old system of eating boiled eggs with a spoon exposed us to great contempt.

Besides the articles I have enumerated—all nicely arranged in the window, or on marble slabs running round the shop—the *crémière* sold certain fruits, as apples, pears, and oranges, in their season, with various kinds of *liqueurs*—brandy, cassis (made of black currants), anisette, and Jamaica rum, manufactured in Touraine; and behind the shop, separated off by a glazed partition, was a little parlour with two tables, wherein the morning breakfasts, consisting of *café au lait*, bread and butter, eggs, omelettes, and even chops and steaks, were served up. Wine and beer, also, were supplied. This was the state of things when I first went to the place. The *crémerie* was transformed into a morning eating-house.

About this time Agricole had not quite taken to live with Fifine, although they were nearly always together. The young girl, a week or so before, trotting along the pavement with her milk-pot in her hand, had noticed the new shop, had gone in, bought a sou's worth, entered into conversation with the *crémière*, been charmed by her affability, and made her acquaintance. "Mark me," said Agricole, relating this fact, "if you wish to form an opinion of a woman's character, observe how she

behaves towards persons of her own sex who are prettier than herself. If she does not notice their beauty, and is taken by their manners, be sure she is a jewel." This is not quite true, because I have seen very ugly and very wicked old ladies, who declare that they cannot bear any but pretty women. Perhaps they have made the same observation as Agricole, and are hypocrites. At any rate, Fifine and Adèle were soon friends, and, from what I can learn, the former spent so much time in the shop, that she lost all her customers, and was obliged definitively to abandon her independent position, and keep house for Agricole. As she had been long known in the quarter, her protection was of some service to the newly-established *crémerie,* encouraging the servants of the neighbouring houses to deal there, in spite of the opposition of the shopkeepers, who long kept up their unaccountable dislike. After this a few of the younger women of the neighbourhood, for the sake of society, began to drop in, and so, by degrees, custom increased.

Agricole found little difficulty in persuading me to take my morning meals for some time at this new place, and soon obtained for me an important privilege—that of dining there also. We lived well, better and cheaper than we could have done at a restaurant, and had the advantage of always seeing the same faces. Agricole and another young man, whom he

called Tom Pouce, employed in one of the Ministries, had preceded me, and I was not sorry to hear that they had come to an agreement that no new person should be admitted to dine without their consent. The rule was, that a unanimous vote was necessary before any addition to our party could be made. We studied, therefore, the characters of those who dropped in at breakfast-time; their names were now and then submitted to us by Madame Adèle, and we came to a solemn decision. Our verdict was generally negative. The table was only large enough for six or seven; and each guest had a right sometimes to bring a friend—generally a lady: so that Agricole was often accompanied by Fifine, and Tom Pouce by Honorine, a genteel-looking person, whom he was courting, and who gained her living by teaching languages. By degrees we added to our number Guguste, as we called him, a clerk in a bookseller's office; Edouard, a sculptor; Jules, a little lithographer; and permitted one or two others to take their meals occasionally. Although there were some features in this kind of life that I regretted, yet, besides that I regarded it as a study of manners, let it be confessed that it was not without its fascination. We were all young, and in pursuit of knowledge or distinction; all of different characters, but with sufficient sympathies to prevent any chance of discord. We came in

regularly about six o'clock; and, although the dinner-hour was seldom very punctually kept, never made any complaint but what was the natural exhalation of a fierce appetite. We had always a good soup, the boiled beef, some roast meat or poultry, vegetables, and dessert, with wine and bread *ad libitum*, for from fifteen to twenty pence. In a little while, after some opposition from Madame Adèle, we smoked our cigars or pipes; and often put off other engagements to remain and play a game of whist. The back-parlour, indeed, became our dining-room and drawing-room; and the mistress of the establishment soon found this to be the most profitable part of her business.

By degrees we got into the habit of calling our society the Club sans Gêne, or the Club of Easy-goers. Alexis, the artist, was voted in unanimously when I proposed him, although there was sometimes scarcely elbow-room at the table. This piece of favouritism brought us into trouble, and was the primary cause of the dissolution of the club. Alexis was very glad of our company, highly flattered by our reception, but after once or twice abstained from presenting himself. The fact is, he could not afford such an extravagant way of living, and hinted in vain that he was ready to execute a splendid full-length portrait of the buxom *crémière* in return for three months' board. Edouard was doing a bust

gratis, with one eye twice as big as the other. My friend—who, by the way, has not yet restored my chest of drawers—disappeared once more beneath the horizon. We had admitted, however, that there was still a place at table, and a new candidate presented himself. This was M. Petit, a man with a yellow face and a black beard, who described himself as a general broker, and who had suddenly begun to spend half the day in the back-parlour. We always maintained, and shall to our dying day, that he was a Jesuit or a spy, or a man of easy virtue. The rest of the club took the matter up more warmly than I did, and solemnly called upon me to join in the opposition to this face and beard. They maintained that the Sieur Petit came to the place under fraudulent pretences—not to eat, but to look at the *crémière;* not as a customer, but—the word must out—as a rival. This is a singular part of my narrative, and is, perhaps, more illustrative of the human heart in general than of French character in particular. All these young men had relations of courtship with some dame, more or less pretty, who, now and then escaping from any trammels that may have surrounded her, came to take her place at our table. They never made the slightest attempt, saving in one instance, to treat Madame Adèle otherwise than as a hostess, who was so pretty that she might be called a friend. Beauty, when it does

not awe, renders one familiar. We were all familiar with Adèle, and nothing more. Yet when this said Petit came, and sat for hours devouring the *crémière* with his eyes—like a serpent trying to fascinate a sparrow—the horrid passion of jealousy was roused in every breast. I believe there was once an idea of putting ratsbane or some other medicine into his porridge. No one attempted to conceal his sentiments. We had respected the virtue of the *crémière*, and so should others. She was part of our property, indeed. As long as her behaviour was correct, the club would stand; but afterwards, not. There was something naively ridiculous in the way proposed by Tom Pouce to protect our hostess from the weakness in which we did not believe, but which we suspected—ridiculous, and yet, to a certain extent, respectable. He developed his philosophy of the female heart. Where he got it I don't know; but, setting aside certain lofty exceptions, what he said was not without likelihood, as applied to France. Women were not made for responsibility; they seem essentially parasitical and dependent: to leave them, therefore, to the protection of their principles, was absurd; they required to be defended in spite of themselves; and it was our duty to see that Adèle had no opportunity of weakness. From the very fact that these discussions took place, I should be inclined to say that we were

all in love, if I could not answer for myself. To be sure, I was there only as a Student of Manners.

Probably we began to put in practice Tom Pouce's ideas before he developed them. Theories are only general statements of moral and material facts. At any rate, if one of the club happened to be present when the obnoxious gentleman came in, he obstinately remained to prevent a *tête-à-tête*, and as obstinately refused to enter into conversation. On one occasion, Agricole went in about mid-day to breakfast, and found M. Petit at one table and Tom Pouce at another.

"Thank Heaven," whispered the latter, "that you have come! I have been waiting here these three hours instead of going to the Ministry, and the scoundrel won't move." So saying he went out, and Agricole remained reading a novel until three o'clock. Still the imperturbable Petit held good; and the sentinel was beginning to lose patience when Guguste came to the rescue. He remained till six, when we all assembled, and his report was given. It was as follows:—"The fellow has whispered to her only once, but I overheard him. He said, 'Can I never see you alone?'" We sat down to dinner, squaring our elbows. The intruder was still there, and ventured to say, "I suppose there is no place for me?" Adèle looked imploringly at us, but we kept our eyes fixed on our plates, and she was

obliged to answer, "No, not to-day." He went to dine at a place nearly opposite, but was back again in half an hour. Most probably he would have remained until midnight, had we not known that he could not stand tobacco; so we filled our pipes, and soon smoked him out. A hornet's nest would not have stood it. We ourselves had scarcely breath for the cheer of ecstasy which greeted his retreat. Adèle laughed, and yet was angry. She explained to us that this Petit was one of her best customers: but we replied, "Is he better than us all put together? We can't abide him. He spoils our digestion; and he is evidently a Jesuit, or worse, if worse can be." Then she adroitly insinuated that the stranger was as good a Republican as any of us —that he ardently desired to join our club—that he had spoken very favourably of our personal appearance and of our intellect. We smiled graciously, but remained obdurate. The compliments were acceptable, but not the man. We felt that our Ideal Mistress was slipping through our fingers—that the black beard and cadaverous face were considered handsome—and, above all, that M. Petit had produced the impression that he was well to do. It could not be concealed from us that the pretty brunette, who talked sometimes so romantically, was keener than we might have wished in money matters; and the idea actually struck us, that our

society was less agreeable than our purses. A crisis evidently was approaching; strong measures became necessary.

Several of the members of the club had offered their services to the hostess in various ways, for she was most unaccountably deficient in assistance. True, there was a regular succession of *bonnes,* or servant-maids, but they rarely stopped more than a week or two; which seemed astonishing, taking into account Adèle's angelic temper and perpetual smile. Fifine, accordingly, sometimes kept the counter; Guguste put the wine and beer in bottle; and Agricole took charge of the accounts. We commissioned the last, accordingly, at once to examine into the state of M. Petit's payments, and the result was, that he had already run up a bill of a hundred and eighty francs. "I now know exactly to what class he belongs," said Agricole. "He lives upon *crémières.* There is a set of fellows who go about in this way preying upon single women in business. I remember some months ago to have seen this Petit hovering about a shop in the Rue de Seine." These facts were duly mentioned, but seemed to produce no effect, except that the stranger ceased to endeavour to force himself into our club, and contented himself with sitting in a white paletot for about six hours every day in the parlour; thus putting a check upon our conversation, and damping our spirits.

I have perhaps extended rather too much upon these reminiscences, forgetting that my principal purpose is to illustrate the state of manners in one section of society. However, what I have said is not without its significance. Here was a knot of young men, all occupying positions of considerable respectability—students, artists, clerks in government offices—making a home of a butter-woman's shop; interesting themselves in her affairs; setting up, with more or less simplicity, as knights-errant of her virtue; associating necessarily with her friends, even with housemaids of the neighbourhood, whose custom was valuable, and whom curiosity brought in when the shop was left dark, and the parlour alone was lighted; with her parents, who from time to time came to see her;—and all this without knowing or caring who she was, and without thinking in any case that they were compromising their dignity! It was a dangerous "Game of Consequences." Of course, *I* can shelter myself under my character of Observer, and was indeed not drawn away from other occupations; but Tom Pouce yielded to the fascinations of the club to such an extent, that he was once on the point of losing his place in the Ministry; Edouard failed when he competed for an academical prize; Master Jules, the lithographer, ran up a score which he could not pay; Agricole had an additional excuse for idleness; and poor Fifine was induced to

give up the inestimable habit of work, and to place herself in a position in which the caprice of a young man, who had other objects and duties in life, alone stood between her and misery or vice.

CHAPTER XV.

The Brune Thérèse—An Arrival—M. X——, a new Clubbist—Story of Madame Adèle—Theory of Marriage—An Ideal—Political Economy — Early Marriages — Polygamy — The "Mistress"—Motives of Women—English Women—Why Girls go Astray—Schmidt—The Infant Adèle—The Blood—A Semi-adoption—Pride must have a Fall—A Marriage de Convenance—Tradesmen's Wives — Why M. X—— sought a Mistress — Conjugal Fidelity — Conflicting Passions—Life a Contest—Virtue in France—Lax tone of Morality—Alexandre Dumas—Details of an Intrigue—French Wives—Severity of the Law—Hide-and-Seek Life—Its Conclusion—The Cigar-shop—Frontier-ground—The Students and the Middle Classes—Public Characters—Political Immorality—Villanous Theories—Progress of Virtue in Free States—Women of Nations we hate—Marie Antoinette and the Empress Eugénie.

MANY other odd things happened at the *crémerie*, the chronology of which I begin to forget. For example, I am not quite sure that Adèle had not related to me a great part of her story before I knew anything about her actual position. This, however, is immaterial. One evening we had just dined, and our hostess, who had pledged us several times, was warbling her characteristic ditty, that relates how the Brune Thérèse was seduced by the promise of fine

clothes and a merry life, when suddenly the door opened, and in walked a short, stout old gentleman, youthfully dressed, with a red face and negro lips, who at once asserted the position of master of the house, by going up, after politely saluting the company, and kissing the cheek that had flushed crimson at his appearance. Glances of intelligence went round the table. We did not know whether this arrival would be a new source of difficulties or would lead to the stability of the club. Somebody whispered, "'Tis her husband;" but without meaning exactly to be so definite. The old gentleman seemed ill at ease, bustled about a little, and then disappeared into a back room. It was evident by this time that the new-comer did not quite approve of the extension of Adèle's business. We could see him peeping from behind the curtain of the glass-door, with that foolish face of inquisitiveness which eaves-droppers, who fancy they are not observed, put on. We afterwards learned that his first impulse was to request the club to find a place of meeting elsewhere; but he soon saw that we were not very dangerous people, and that our departure would change a profitable business into a losing one. How many of our impulses are checked by such vile considerations! M. X——, however, having made up his mind, behaved in a very easy, gentlemanly way, and on that and other occasions joined the sittings

of the club, of which he became a member *de jure*, and proved quite a valuable addition. He was a man of great experience of the world, considerable knowledge, with a certain pedantic elegance in his manner, that was far from unpleasing, and we soon found that he occupied a very remarkable position in society. Habit induced us to continue our meetings some time after this discovery; but we had lost the principal cause of attraction, and by degrees the club broke up: not, however, before we had learned the whole mystery of this establishment. It is unnecessary to give every detail; but as from peculiar circumstances, and from the inspection of documents, I became acquainted with the whole story of Madame Adèle, I shall relate some features of it, premising that M. X—— may be taken as a type, both in construction of mind and in ideas of morality, of that great class which was created, or rather corrupted, if we may believe French writers, by the Government of July.

It is difficult to give a proper idea of the character and modes of thought of a nation without discussing, as far as decorum will permit, the unlawful relations of the sexes. We may always judge of the level to which civilisation has risen or fallen in any country, by the amount of divergence that exists in it from the theoretical purity of the institution of marriage. If we could find a nation in

which, at an early period of life, young men were encouraged by laws and manners to take unto themselves a wife corresponding in station—or, at least, in education—with themselves, and sufficiently different in age to allow, under the supposition of long life, the two to decay simultaneously, and in which the duties of this union were faithfully observed, we should find a nation in which legislation would have little to do, and in which all political and social problems would be solved without difficulty. This, however, is not the ideal which reformers in these times pursue. The best-intentioned men, not finding in their speculations any way of providing for the natural increase of the human species, frightened by the prospect of superabundant population, can think of nothing better to recommend than the prolongation of youth almost beyond the confines of the period of manhood. In this way possible populations are removed from the world, and there are more prizes in the social lottery for those whose existence is admitted. Having come to this great conclusion, political economy ought to abdicate. It has reduced itself to absurdity. There is no difference between the results of its teaching and the dictates of individual egotism, which have led to the present state of morals and manners in France. The rigid deduction from its doctrines would, indeed, be infanticide—the flowery

cemeteries of Marcus, or the Chinese system of exposure. We have heard little of these theories of late, because a very slight demand for labour in another part of the world has created alarm lest hands should be wanting at the plough or the spindle; and a minister has been compelled to fall back on the "productive" powers of the western counties. I still observe, however, great praises bestowed on the late marriages in Switzerland and France; but in the former country there are causes at work, and guarantees existing, which could not be found in more crowded civilisations; and in the latter I can venture to say, that, among the classes in which circumstances are not opposed, there is scarcely a single man who, before he becomes the head of a family, has not formed some unrecognised union, or, still worse, has not been the hero of one of those intrigues in which, according to the new school of novelists, true passion can alone develope itself.

As might be expected, habits acquired in youth, laxity of opinion not combated by any prevalent system of morality, are hard to be thrown aside; and therefore it is too true that many married men practise, with little disguise, an almost oriental system of polygamy, although the tone of society, which in this is rather hypocritical than rigid, requires certain bounds to be kept. The code itself is very severe

on cases in which the conjugal dwelling is turned into a harem; and it is considered, at any rate, want of taste to appear in certain public places with an unauthorised companion. Beyond these limits neither the law nor opinion presumes to interfere. I have no doubt that, in England, concealed in obedience to a high tone of morality existing in our society, which cannot be denied, and which forms the true palladium of our civilisation, many things more or less criminal are done that might come under the category of which I am speaking. But at any rate we need not, in writing of English manners, unless from choice, treat of any class which stands, no matter under what new conditions, in the same relation to a family as the hand-maidens of the East.

When the word "mistress" was used by the old poets and romancers, it was not always in the same sense as at present in France. It is now the feminine of lover, and the world does not inquire into the morality of such relations. The great euthanasia of a mistress in France who does not choose to become a *lorette,* and who cannot aspire to marriage, is to be "established," as they describe it; that is to say, be put in the way of gaining her living in business. Of the motives by which they are led to form unlawful *liaisons,* I shall speak in another place, but they are rarely influenced by what

they call "passion;" thus desecrating and confining the meaning of a word which belongs to poetry. They have invented—and this remark has a wider range of application—a false thing called sentiment, which excludes all bewilderment and impulse, and is perfectly compatible with interest and calculation. Sentiment is love tied by a string, and taught to flutter where its owner bids it. A Frenchwoman feels indignant at the supposition that she has been led away only for the reasons that might excuse her in the eyes of men. She says that her object was to ensure her future; that she could not earn sufficient to maintain herself; and she knows that these admissions will be eloquent with such of her own sex as have fought the fight of poverty, and have not within them that spiritual enthusiasm which gives so many of our English daughters the constancy in prolonged suffering, which is superior to the convulsive and almost diseased perseverance of the martyr at the stake. I believe that the French girl, when she goes astray, has little consciousness of guilt; and, indeed, after she has surmounted the shame which she at first feels in deference to public opinion, and in obedience to certain hints that come uncalled for from the depths of her nature, she easily adapts herself to her new position, and behaves herself with an amount of modesty and decorum that suggests the idea of hypocrisy to Englishmen, and

drives moralists to despair. However, in most or many cases, the sequel proves that law-givers, and philosophers, and religions, have not laid down rules in vain; for when the secret hope, that enables these unhappy women to preserve comparative purity of manners, is foiled—when they despair of entering, after their circuitous course, the bounds of legal life by marriage—their courage often fails them; they begin to pursue near objects—become less scrupulous as to means—look upon themselves as entitled to take care of their own fortune in their own way—discard old relations—form new ones under conditions less and less strict—and concentrate, unless they fall to a level where we cannot here follow them, all their energies to acquiring something like an independent position in this world.

After the peace of 1815, an Alsatian, named Schmidt, who had served in the Imperial army, not as a fighting-man, but as a shoemaker attached to one of the regiments, came to Paris, and formed an acquaintance with a woman of considerable personal attractions, who enjoyed the advantage of some protection, into which it is not necessary to inquire. He married her, and set up in his old trade; whilst she, with characteristic prudence, laid by the income she received to form a resource when respectable age came upon her, and returned to her former

occupation as a washerwoman, from which a brilliant episode had removed her. The fruit of this union was, in the first place, a daughter, whom they named Adèle. The infant, according to report, which I can well believe, was a prodigy of loveliness. It became quite celebrated in the neighbourhood; and a retired opera-dancer, who had seen the mother in a different sphere, suggested, when the cradle had scarcely been vacated, that the child ought to be brought up for the stage. A singular fatality seems, indeed, to bring one generation under the evil auspices of its predecessor.

As early as the age of six, Adèle began to take lessons in dancing; and already at that time ideas of pleasure and a love of luxury were introduced into her mind. It is in those early years that our forms of thought are often acquired, so that, when we find them in our minds, we fancy them to be inherited, not remembering whence they came. Adèle used to maintain that she was born with the love of luxury—with a taste for a brilliant existence—with theatrical tendencies, and opera morality. She laid everything to her blood; and, indeed, this innocent and stupid fluid is made to answer among the vulgar in all countries for the greater part of their faults, as for half their diseases.

Adèle's theatrical career, however, was cut

short; but not before it had time to influence her fortunes. A pious old lady—a living rosary, as she was ungratefully called—who had consented to stand as her godmother, desiring to rescue her from what she said would be inevitable ruin, promised to adopt the girl on condition that the parents allowed her to be taken into the country. Possibly the old lady only sought for a companion, and was very indifferent about Adèle's future prospects. She kept her for many years in a state of comparative opulence—had her taught several accomplishments —accustomed her to soft living—and then died, without leaving her *protégée*, who was about thirteen years old, the slightest provision. Such injudicious semi-adoptions are frequent in all countries. Adèle's parents for a time recurred to the old plan of educating her for the stage; but they were less at their ease than formerly—the mother's protection had ceased—they had speculated greedily in some enterprise, and lost—their family had increased—and so, at the age of fourteen, Mademoiselle Adèle, after a good deal of crying and a little beating, consented to spoil her pretty hands by assisting in the abominable occupation of washing. Here was a fall to her pride! She devoured her vexation in secret; and, if we may believe her own statements, thus early looked forward to rebellion.

It is not necessary to expose all the little pecca-

dilloes of early life, the small episodes by which an ambitious young girl proves beyond a doubt that her intention is not to remain in the humble rank of life to which her parents would reduce her. Before Adèle was seventeen they found a husband for her, far above what could reasonably have been expected, and yet not quite capable of satisfying all her longings for luxury. He was in business, and seems to have chosen her partly from mere caprice, partly because her beauty would adorn his shop and please his customers. In France it is the habit for the wife of a tradesman, instead of performing the ordinary duties of the mother of a family, to transact most of his affairs in which anything like diplomacy, or anything that requires instruction, is necessary. She does his correspondence, keeps his accounts, calls upon the principal people he deals with, and acts as the cashier in almost every case. This it is that gives most of the Parisian women of the bourgeois class that sharp and eager look, which is the peculiarity of the miser, and which accurately represents their state of mind. There is no person so keen, so hard, so unmerciful, in money matters, as the Parisian shopkeeper's wife. It is she that keeps him in the ways of an economy that easily descends to parsimony; it is she that prevents him running risks of loss by giving credit; and it is she who urges him to persecute unfortunate debtors, and pursue them

even to prison. Any one who looks at her countenance, and studies her vocabulary, may be convinced, without special instances, that this is a true picture. I may mention, however, that the greater part of the fraudulent bankruptcies that take place are known to be suggested and managed by women.

M. X—— was a merchant of considerable wealth. He was a widower with one son, and had determined not to marry again, in order that his property might go intact to his heir. Naturally, therefore, he looked out for a mistress; and was led by circumstances to fix upon the lady whom I shall still call Madame Adèle. The fact of her being married was rather an inducement than otherwise. It is absurd and monstrous to believe or say, as some English writers have done, that there is no such thing as conjugal fidelity in France. To contradict this assertion it is not necessary to have had any personal experience, or any acquaintance with the literature and history of the country. The simple fact that France still exists as a nation, is sufficient to enable us to assert, that there, as elsewhere, human nature developes itself in multiple forms, and that examples of every virtue as of every vice are to be found. The people that could produce no instances of conjugal fidelity would belong to a different species, and would not be amenable to the same moral laws as others. We could not apply to them any of our standards, and should be com-

pelled to treat of their manners as we do of those of deer or bees, without either approbation or reprobation.

It is a fault into which superficial writers easily fall, to look upon nations and individuals as possessed of certain differential qualities, according to which they do thus and thus; whereas we are all capable of the same errors, and are all furnished with the same good instincts. Every man may be a murderer, and every man may be a slave. The conflict of principles in this world is not carried on between man and man, but between passion and passion; and the whole history of the whole human species is epitomised in the career of one of its members, now seeking pleasure, now fascinated by virtue, now yielding to the dictates of interest, now indulging in the luxury of self-sacrifice, now cowering beneath the frown of power, now following the beck of liberty, now led away, in short, by material impulses, now obeying spiritual calls, stumbling at times, at times rising erect, struggling onwards, and by turns deserving of the extremity of contempt or of dithyrambic praise. Many moralists who have seen only one of these two aspects have ventured to say, that all women are courtesans by nature, taking half a truth for the whole truth; or, perhaps, in order to indulge in the epigrammatic insult of which *roués* are so fond, wilfully omitting to say that all women

are likewise capable of the sanctity of virtue. I have often heard great indignation expressed by virtuous matrons at the idea that it could be possible they should be unchaste; but if it is not possible, there is no merit, nor does blame attach to others who pursue a different but equally predestined career. In this, as in other cases, life is a contest; but it is highly immoral to maintain, as some do, that any family of the human race can be so under the dominion of Circumstance, "that unspiritual god," that all its members, or all but exceptions, must necessarily be found without the limits of any of the great laws to which we are all responsible. We find, therefore, that in France, as elsewhere, there are vast numbers of families in which all the conditions under which that institution exists are observed. Statistics are impossible; testimony is of little value; although old residents in France have spoken to me with scorn when I have asked their opinion on this matter. According to the position they have accidentally occupied, they maintain that virtue is the rule, or that virtue is common; but no one who has opportunities of judging, except professional satirists, maintains the view against which I argue. Its professors are slightly-travelled, or quite untravelled people, who land in France believing that they have only to throw the handkerchief. A week or so teach them a little humility, and in a few months they

are ready to witness against their former selves. But it is not necessary to go to scattered sources of information; for I believe it will be admitted, that if the laws of marriage were universally disregarded, not only would language and forms of thought be rapidly changed, but family life, without which civilisation cannot exist, would be discontinued, and the race itself would soon disappear.

Having said this much, I am entitled to observe that—arguing from the tone of literature, from facts occasionally made public, and from what I have seen and heard—there is in France much less respect for the institution of marriage than in England, much greater laxity of practice, and a strong tendency to look upon infidelity with a lenient eye. I believe it would be impossible in England for a writer (in the "Times," for example,) to say, speaking of his own life some twenty years back, "At that time I was in love with a married woman, whose husband was an officer in the army. I heard that he was about to obtain leave of absence, and I went in a transport of jealousy, and persuaded a person employed in the Ministry of War to tear up the despatch containing the leave." This is an abridged statement of what M. Alexandre Dumas has recently published in the "Presse;" and as it has passed without observation, it is fair to say, that a large portion of the French public would hear, without the slightest astonishment

and scarcely with blame, what I am about to relate of the doings of M. X——.

I rather shrink from the details of this corrupt transaction. The object of M. X—— was not a passing intrigue, but a permanent *liaison*. He wished to detach Madame Adèle from her husband; and his first step was to find out Madame Schmidt, the mother, and to engage, provided success attended his efforts, to pay her an annual stipend. The idea of comparative independence thus suggested was too fascinating to resist. The main object of the conspiracy was to bring about a legal separation, between Madame Adèle and her husband. This man, though he appears to have been an infamous character, was not disposed to make a disgraceful bargain. It was necessary, therefore, to compel his consent; and as it was discovered or suspected that he had an intrigue with a young woman employed as a housekeeper, which is a delinquency foreseen and punished by the law, M. X—— set his agents to work to find proofs of this fact. But Madame Adèle, although quite willing to intrigue, would not, at first, consent to leave her family, for she had a daughter; and, therefore, for some time gave no assistance to the endeavours made to entrap her husband. The method of attack, therefore, was changed, and X—— did his best to prove to the husband that his wife was false. The man stormed and threatened; but

X—— had, in the meantime, advanced him money on bills, and spoke of arrest. Dreadful scenes ensued, and Adèle, after having been often beaten and threatened with death, at length ran away. A Frenchwoman is rarely induced to take this step. Elopements are much less common in France than in England. One reason is a strong family feeling, which seems to exist irrespective of conjugal fidelity. A wife who will admit that she has deceived her husband will indignantly reject the idea of running away from him and her children, and will tell you that such an act would be "dishonourable." She looks upon herself something of the light of a partner in a commercial concern, and, though she may have one or more lovers, will fight hard to preserve her husband's reputation. Nothing offends her so much as an insult offered to "*ce pauvre homme.*" We cannot understand this in England, where women are more virtuous, more impulsive, and more sentimental, and where the idea of chastity is the central one in their mind; which being removed, all others fall into disorder. From what I have observed, there exists something like the French mode of thinking amongst our lower classes; but in genteel society, if an intrigue is not followed by an elopement, it is seldom the fault of the woman, and must be attributed to the prudence or selfishness of the man.

In France there is another reason which with-

holds women from leaving their families; namely, the severity of the laws. The abominable system of granting pecuniary damages is unknown, but infidelity is punished by imprisonment. The seducer himself may be imprisoned, but not without a kind of proof very difficult to be obtained. A husband is obliged to obtain information of some rendezvous, and to come with a Commissary of Police, and break open the doors; but this conduct is considered highly ungenteel, and is only resorted to by common-place people. In the case of the wife the proof is easier, and the fact of leaving the conjugal roof is sufficient. The husband then becomes, as it were, the gaoler of his wife, and she may be sent to prison for a term not exceeding three years; but he has the privilege of procuring her liberty by agreeing to take her back. I have heard of instances in which, after one escapade of this kind, a wife has returned penitent to her family, and has never afterwards given cause for complaint.

It is unnecessary to follow Madame Adèle into the hide-and-seek kind of life to which she was now condemned. She had, at the same time, to conceal herself from her husband, who did not wish to take her back, but simply to get M. X—— into his power, and to prevent the son of her seducer from knowing of her existence. She spent many years in a miserable way, passing from lodging to lodging, not with-

out giving her protector cause of jealousy, and at length began to think of making a provision for the future. Her object was not accomplished without difficulty; because, in the first place, there being no recognised separation, she could not legally possess any property in her own name, and because M. X——, with not unjustifiable precaution, wished to keep her in his power. Though wealthy, moreover, he was not inclined to make money sacrifices; and when, at our last interview, he calmly related the most disgraceful parts of these transactions, said that he "wished to be loved for himself,"—the common delusion of ancient rakes. At length, however, Adèle persuaded him to set her up in business in a distant quarter, and to give her some papers, which she did not know were perfectly valueless except as means of intimidation, recognising her right of possession. This done, he was called away by his affairs to some foreign country, and thus gave an opportunity for the formation of the club, the history of which I have related.

We only learned these things piecemeal; and, indeed, it was not until an event occurred that led to the disappearance of the *crémerie* that I became acquainted with all the details. I have suppressed many circumstances, and slightly touched upon others; for my object is rather, as I have said, to give some idea of the kind of people we may meet with by bur-

rowing beneath the surface of society in Paris, than to construct a complete narrative. Perhaps if I had told everything to my readers exactly in the words of the note which is now before me, and in which I have put down all incidents with legal precision, I might have excited the morbid interest which waits on a trial at the Old Bailey; but I have said enough for my purpose, and shall merely add, that, after having been some time in disgrace on account of the persevering Petit, Madame Adèle is again under the protection of M. X——, who "comes of a forgiving kind;" and that if any of my readers go into a certain cigar-shop somewhere between the Madeleine and the Place de la Bastile, they will see her behind the counter. She has reached the height of her ambition. I may here observe, that a tobacconist in Paris is almost an official. The place, at any rate, is in the gift of Government; and it is forbidden by law to dispose of it. This does not prevent advertisements appearing every day in the papers offering tobacco shops for sale. In principle, they are granted as a kind of pension to deserving people; but they are often, as in the case I have mentioned, procured by influential individuals to bestow as rewards for immorality.

I have diverged rather further than I intended for the present from my sketch of the manners of students and the formation of the young French

mind, and have led the reader into that frontier-ground, where unsettled existences congregate in search of amusement or pleasure, as far as possible removed from the operation of the laws of opinion. It will be seen that strange ideas of morality are here in action. The students, upon whom I thought it necessary to be so severe, because they sometimes form unlawful relations, and run into debt with very vague ideas of payment, call to me, in reproachful accents, to "rehabilitate" them; and, indeed, comparing their peccadilloes with the frightful corruption of their seniors and contemporaries, it is but just to say that at present they form the most respectable portion of French subjects, and that on them the destiny of France depends. With few exceptions, hustled aside by circumstances, all the classes which used to constitute what was called the "legal country" under Louis Philippe, are incurably corrupt. The only assistance they can give in the regeneration of their country is to stand aside, and let the young generations have their way. Politicians, diplomatists, financiers, functionaries, professional men, civil and military authorities, all have been tried and found wanting. I scarcely know a single public character, whose name has been mentioned within the last ten years, against whom some overwhelming accusation of dishonesty, weakness, or corrupt tergiversation, has not been

directed. Revolutions put people to the test; they purify some choice natures, but they corrupt the majority—defeated parties especially. Fear is a bad moralist. Where is the Bayard of France now?

It is painful at first sight, but in reality cheering, to reflect that all this political immorality corresponds with extensive private immorality. The advocates of expediency are fond of saying that governors are emancipated from ordinary rules of ethics; that perjury and murder may be, without blame, employed in conducting the affairs of a nation; and that a tyrant or a usurper may be highly respectable as an individual. This theory is the overthrow of all ideas of right whatever. It reduces everything to a matter of regulation, and leads to the theory of social life prevalent under Louis Philippe's reign; according to which nothing was wrong, and nothing right, but what the law had declared to be so. M. Thiers once distinctly stated that "there were no rights save written rights;" and has gone so far as to maintain that "there are no principles—there are only situations." These maxims have a pleasant air of audacity that favours their acceptance, and they are protected from analysis by their epigrammatic form. Weak people, anxious to be thought Machiavellic, are prompt to adopt them. It is the art of immoral statesmen to

prepare their own absolution by spreading the theory that politics are a mere game of chess, in which the most cunning wins; but it is cheering, as I have said, to find that corrupt doctrines of government are the spawn of a corrupt state of manners; that there is no fatal necessity, according to which the business of a nation must be conducted on the principles of sharpers and blacklegs; and that to educate and moralise the people is the surest way to place virtue in the cabinet. Faithful biographies of our own statesmen would show, that exactly in proportion as the purification of our morals has proceeded, have the private characters of our rulers been raised; and a careful examination of their acts will bring to light the still more consoling fact, which the advocates of expediency may digest as they can, that an honest man is an honest minister; and that he who behaves honourably to a friend will advocate a manly, if not an able, policy, in parliament. We have now advanced so far in virtue, that it is much easier to find an honest statesman than a wise one.

In the East, if a man wishes to offer a bitter affront to any one, he speaks ill of his father and mother. We are all disposed to be harsh upon the women of a nation we do not like. I have heard the bigoted antagonists of free institutions impudently assert that chastity is unknown to our Ameri-

can sisters; and, as the reader has seen, there is a tendency in a certain class of French writers to calumniate even English wives. I am happy, therefore, to find that, without premeditation, my criticisms bear much harder upon the bearded section of our neighbours than upon their ladies; whom, however, I cannot warrant as unexceptionable. The description I have given of the *crémerie* will show what kind of system has been substituted for that of the *petites maisons*, of which we hear so much in narratives of the last century. Nearly every man of property then possessed, besides his great hôtel, "a little house," devoted to his amours. All his assignations took place there. At present, when it has become fashionable for the middle classes to imitate, in their way, these lordly doings, substantial men set up their mistresses in business, or hire a handsome cottage for them at Meudon or Auteuil. Even students club together to take a villa for the summer. However, these facts can no longer be predicated of whole classes as of yore. There are to be met with puritan young men, decent and moral bourgeois; and even the noblesse have become tolerably correct in conduct.

But, as I have hinted, if we were to take the opinion expressed by political antagonists of the women of the various parties and classes, we should imagine the whole nation to be one vast lupunar. It

is worthy of remark, that the severest and most effective accusation of the Legitimist party against the Republicans is the death of Marie Antoinette. No one has taken the trouble to point out, however, that that queen fell a victim to the infamous reputation which had been given her, not by the people, who afterwards condemned her, but by that very chivalrous nobility which has ever since whined over her fate, and endeavoured to exalt her into a goddess. The people never use calumny or detraction as their weapon. If they object to their governors, they throw up barricades against them. But the sleek Marquis and the comfortable Bourgeois find it more convenient to nestle in their easy-chairs and shoot little poisoned arrows at their enemies, taking away their characters, and exciting the hard-handed people to attack them. If any, however, are so imprudent as to listen to their incitements, they instantly flock for protection under the skirts of power, raise the cry of "spoliation," and give the signal for massacre.

The middle and upper classes, who were too timid to resist the *coup d'état*, and who crowded round the authority that threatened to fire grape-shot into them, have now recommenced a war of calumny—or, at any rate, of detraction—against the Imperial Court. Whilst the sulky Republican is biding his time, the coward Orleanist and the ram-

pant Legitimist—with that ridiculous Minotaur, the Fusionist—have raised their heads, astonished at not finding themselves crushed, and begin to spit venom on the foot that still keeps them down. The people laughed good-humouredly at the romantic marriage of the Emperor. They object to the colour of his lady's hair, and say that she is not so handsome as a bouncing Parisian grisette; but even those who believe what is said against her care little to gloat over it. The Politicals, who were not found at the barricades, try to weaken the Emperor by representing the wife of his choice as a Crowned Lorette. They rake up or invent, with a charity that seems proportioned to their piety, the bitterest anecdotes of the private life of Mademoiselle de Montijo. They will not forgive her for one of her failings—not even for the frank manners that likened her to an English girl; and all the Pharisees of France are ready to stone this Magdalen, who has chosen, as they will have it, to repent in the purple lap of Empire. This is a despicable mode of warfare, worthy of those who use it. History will blame the Empress on other grounds; for her choice condemns her as deprived of strong moral perceptions. She will be forgiven, however, by the majority of the people, who will understand that the refulgence of the sun that shone upon her made the spots of blood that flecked it indistinct to her eyes. But if ever a triumphant

insurrection should crush her in its progress, depend upon it that, not to lose another opportunity of calumniating the Demos, all Gentility, that now unceasingly slanders, will be affected to tears, and will unite to place Saint Eugénie by the side of Saint Marie Antoinette!

END OF VOL. I.

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